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Starring Ken Clark & Yvette Vickers
1960 / B&W / Mono / Approx. 68 min.

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1960 / B&W / Mono / Unrated / Approx.74 min

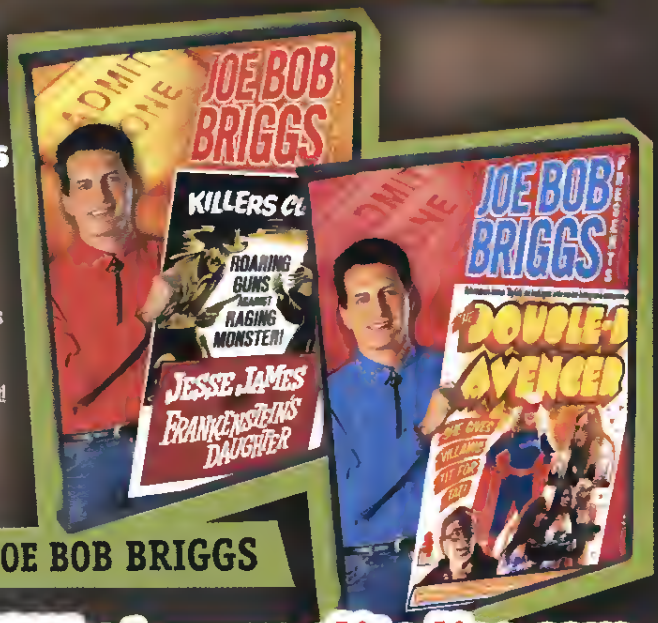
VOLUME THREE

I BURY THE LIVING
A newly appointed cemetery chairman discovers that by inserting a black pin into a wall-sized map of the cemetery he can cause the deaths of that plot's owner
1958 / B&W / Mono / Not rated / Approx. 76 min.

THE HAND
During World War II British soldiers are captured by the Japanese tortured and their hands are cut off. Years later a killer terrorizes London by cutting off the hands of his victims. Starring Don Sullivan Fred Graham & Lisa Simone.
1960 / B&W / Mono / Not Rated / Approx. 61 min.

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with famous cult/drive-in film critic **JOE BOB BRIGGS**



JESSE JAMES MEETS FRANKENSTEIN'S DAUGHTER
This final film of William Beaudine has an all-star cast, beginning with Estrellita, the Cuban spitfire herself, who was sort of the Chere of her day, seen here in a rare non-singing, non-dancing role. Also starring Narda Onyx as the Teutonic Bitch with a Beaker in the title role and muscleman Cal Bolder as the big dumb ox she needs for her experiments. Fortunately, this renown-killer of a movie didn't affect the future work of the great Rayford Barnes, as the hotheard tomcat outlaw, and Jim Davis, who would become internationally famous as Jock Ewing in "Dallas."

THE DOUBLE-D AVENGER
Big, busty Chastity Knott must use her new, amazing abilities as the super-stacked, costumed crime fighter, the DOUBLE-D AVENGER, to stop villainous bikini bar owner Al Purplewood and his sexy, murderous strippers. Starring Kitten Natividad (Russ Meyer's Beneath The Valley Of The Ultra-Vixens), Haji (Russ Meyer's Faster Pussycat! Kill! Kill!) and Raven De La Croix (Russ Meyer's Up!), this campy romp also features a special appearance by Forrest J. Ackerman (Famous Monsters of Filmland magazine).

Audio Commentary by JOE BOB BRIGGS

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PRELUDE TO PAIN 16
Audition, the movie that burned powerhouse director Takashi Miike into the North American nervous system finally gets the recognition it deserves; an interview with Japan's legendary director. Plus: Miike's Meanest Moments, Eli Roth on directing Miike, and more.
by **Tom Mes, Jovanka Vuckovic, Dave Alexander, Owen Livermore** and **Sean Plummer**

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August 2005 Issue #48

Note From Underground



Most people think back on the '70s as that time when theatrics were out, gritty realism was in, and the monster in the closet was, more often than not, very human and very disturbed. *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* looms large in those recollections, as do other horror flicks featuring household appliances put to ill use by men and women gone horribly mad. But the '70s are seldom remembered for the other monsters, the creatures of the unexplained who used to slink on television in grainy, washed-out glimpses, usually from home cameras wielded by amateur hands.

During that decade, the world was overrun with creatures fantastic and strange. Having been whispered to life by a fireside culture, these mysterious monsters eventually came into being through the curious chemistry of Fortean philosophy (which expressed skepticism about scientific explanations) and good old-fashioned hucksterism. Rumours became possible, and possibility became probability in the pseudo-science of cryptozoology – the study of hidden animals to practitioners, to everyone else, the sober consideration that fantastic creatures could exist on the earth. The world was changing, and those fireside yarns found a cinematic counterpart in footage from hand-held cameras that, like the stories, remained the product and property of the general public.

Sometime in 1968, two amateur investigators achieved the miraculous. They managed to produce a film depicting a Bigfoot, doubly miraculous because the elusive creature – a giant bipedal ape – was nothing less than the Holy Grail of cryptozoological lore. (And even more astonishing is that, to this day, the footage continues to be the topic of hot debate.)

The age of the mysterious monsters had arrived in the warm light of day, drawing attention to other possibilities – tales of a sea serpent in the icy waters of a certain Scottish lake, an abominable snowman in the snowbound peaks of the Himalayas, a goat-sucking monster in rural Mexico and even living dinosaurs. The world became suddenly, incredibly stranger, and news reports started coming in of disappearing ships and airplanes in the Atlantic, strange light formations in the night sky, and the suggestion that ancient astronauts had visited the world in the remote past.

Television warmed to the new fad and classic shows like *In Search Of*, *Nova* and *Mysteries of the Unexplained* became overnight sensations. Sold as documentaries, these shows were less concerned with factual science than they were with exploring the idea that the world was strange and frightening, and they did so with a mountain of grainy stills where – like Rorschach ink blots – unsettled viewers could project their deepest fears. The mere possibility that there existed things that science could not explain made the world that much more deliciously eerie.

Of course, once the actual scientists took an interest, all the mysteries dissipated like so much hookah pipe smoke. Like an illusion revealed to the audience, the sensationalism that kept the world wonderfully weird was defused and debunked, and once the magic was gone, there was nothing left but the diehards. The mysterious monsters had drowned in the tide of derision that comes when nightmares are recalled in the light of day.

Sadly, when the monsters died, a lot of possibilities died with them, because few people ever understood that all that bad journalism actually made for some great scares. To this day I am amazed that so few genre filmmakers have cribbed the techniques from those old shows. The few who have – Ed Sánchez and Daniel Myrick for *The Blair Witch Project* and M. Night Shyamalan for *Signs* – have shown that those old techniques still work, and work exceedingly well. Because, contrary to popular belief, there is one thing that is scarier than the truth... and that's the possibility of the truth.

RG

rod@rue-morgue.com

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RUE MORGUE MAGAZINE

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DESIGN BY GARY PULLIN

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Post Mortem

QUESTIONS • COMMENTS • CRITICISM

I PURCHASED your June issue only because it had *War of the Worlds* on the cover. That movie is my all-time favourite sci-fi/horror film of the '50s. I was greatly surprised to learn that Miss Robinson was still with us. I had watched a television show from LA that was about to show *WotW*, and the host had stated that Miss Robinson passed away in 1981 from cancer. Obviously he was greatly mistaken. Miss Robinson was the best actor of the movie, far better than Gene Barry's stiff and uncomfortable Dr. Forrester. Her scream when she sees her uncle walking toward the Martian war machines is so real and genuine that I almost jumped out of my skin when I heard it. Please, is there any way on earth (or Mars) that I can get an address to write to this lady and tell her how much I enjoyed her performance?

Jim Jimenez – Bakersfield, California

Mrs. Robinson regularly reads Rue Morgue, *so you can consider your message delivered.*

I JUST FINISHED reading *RM#46* and wanted to commend you guys on your most excellent magazine. I enjoyed just about every bit of it, but what particularly stood out for me was Chris Alexander's article on *American Psycho* which is, in my opinion, one of the most under-appreciated films ever, just as the book was back when it came out. Finally, kudos to you guys for the coverage of anime such as *Requiem* and great death metal bands such as Bloodbath, Morgoth, and of course Six Feet Under – two things that I've noticed often missing from your pages.

Elliott Rodriguez – address withheld

I ABSOLUTELY LOVED your *War of the Worlds* issue. Sci-fi and horror, to me, have always gone together well, even if their marriage tends to make the line between the two really hard to define at times. Anyway, I loved all the info and background on H.G. Wells, particularly since it showed both his brilliance and his darkness.

Josh Austin – Newnan, Georgia

I MUST ADMIT, the cover art of your June 2005 issue and subject that lies therein are none other than a work of beauty, but how can you find it in yourselves to release an issue in the same month that will see the long-awaited release of Romero's fourth Dead film *Land of the Dead* and not give it cover status?! If anything in the genre deserves the precious real estate of your cover, it's *Land of the Dead*! I'll be the first to admit that *War of the Worlds* has done a lot for the sci-fi/horror genre, but you are a HORROR magazine and you don't get more horror than the movie we have all been waiting for for twenty years.

Mikey Horror – address withheld

ONE OF THE COMMENTS in the Post Mortem column of your last issue struck a nerve with me when I read it today. Mike Pisani expressed his distaste for John W. Bowen's review of *Clonus* and his use of the phrase "the banality of evil" while referring to the President of the United States. I wonder if Mr. Pisani actually read the review in the context it was meant, or shut his brain off when he saw the possibility that someone was actually questioning his beloved leader. I did not feel as though John W. Bowen was "throwing his politics" into the review, but merely making an observation regarding the similarities between a character's portrayal of a "shady yet bland presidential candidate" and the presidential terms of Bush Senior and Junior. I find it offensive when someone can turn a blind eye to what is going on in the world today, yet can find the time to criticize a review in a magazine because "as an American", he's offended by their opinion. Mr. Pisani didn't appreciate John W. Bowen throwing his politics into a horror magazine, but the only person I see doing this is Mr. Pisani himself.

Tamara Sellers – Grand Rapids, Michigan

I AM A HUGE FAN of Tobe Hooper's *Lifeforce* and appreciated the coverage of one of my favourite films in your last issue. In addition, Jack Ketchum's *The Girl Next Door* still haunts me even though it has been a few years since I have read it. I have begun to look at your magazine as a portal for further research as well. Who knew that the *Cannibal Holocaust* video box art was inspired by Goya? My wife, who is not much of a horror fan, has also become interested in your magazine due to your great coverage of contemporary and historic artists. I would love to become a lifetime subscriber but for now I guess two years at a time will have to do.

William King – Yorba Linda, California

I HAVE NOTICED that in the last couple of issues, fans have been bitching because they don't agree with certain reviews or with how they were worded, or because younger viewers might not watch certain films because of bad reviews. First of all, *Rue Morgue* is giving us their honest opinion, they're not going to lie to us like those other magazines do, and I for one appreciate that. Check the movies out for yourself, if you agree, great, if you don't, cool, but don't write in telling everybody how wrong the reviewer was. How many times have you seen movies that you love but all of your friends hate?

Chet Lemmons – Orlando, Florida

I APPRECIATE the shout-out in the review of *The Suckling*, but I have no idea where the writer got the idea that I played the college student in the film. I'm actually only in two scenes, inside the monster suit. It was fun playing the Teenage Mutant Ninja Fetus for a couple of days, but I thought that particular part of my filmography had long ago vanished into the ether. Sigh, the power of DVD.

Michael Gingold – New York, New York

WHILE I LOVED the articles on Shinya Tsukamoto, Charles Bums, Parastone Studios, Ward Boult, and the rest in *RM#45*, I wish to especially applaud and thank Rod Gudino for his Note From Underground. As a filmmaker, I am constantly frustrated that scary movies are taken less seriously than other genres, and that many filmmakers and fans seem to reinforce this by holding them to lesser standards. Horror movies should be, first off, good movies as well. I'd like to hope your letter will be part of a cry for higher standards. I hope it will challenge filmmakers to examine their work and push themselves to a higher level. Thanks for being honest about the state of the genre, and asking for more.

David Schmidt – address withheld

We encourage readers to send their comments via mail or e-mail. Letters may be edited for length and/or content. Please send to info@rue-morgue.com or:

POST MORTEM
c/o Rue Morgue Magazine
2926 Dundas St. West, Toronto, ON, M6P 1Y8, Canada

Dreadlines

News Highlights Horror Happenings

Rue Morgue opens doors to House of Horror

Rue Morgue is proud to announce the official opening this month of The Rue Morgue House of Horror, the magazine's new office in what was one of the city's oldest funeral homes. The centrepiece of the Toronto landmark will be its in-house theatre that will function as a unique venue for events sponsored by the magazine.

"We've actually taken the old chapel and converted it into a theatre with a stage, screen and surround sound capabilities," remarks *Rue Morgue* president/Editor-In-Chief Rod Gudino. "There'll be weekly horror movie double bills, special presentations and, of course, the Shoppe of Horror will also be open for business."

Conceived as a boutique for serious collector culture, the Shoppe of Horror will feature original prints by many of the top artists working in the genre today, as well as hard-to-get one-off collectibles and signed limited editions of books and movies.

"The idea was to avoid competing with toy stores in the city," says Gudino, "but to offer the serious collector a chance to get the kind of stuff that is not available anywhere else."

The main attraction of the newly refurbished House of Horror, however, will be movies every weekend (Friday and Saturday at 7pm and 9pm). Themed double bills featuring Vincent Price will be presented back-to-back with Asian shock fests, Satanic cinema from Mexico, werewolf double features and tons more. The magazine's monthly CineMacabre Movie Night events at the Bloor Cinema will continue unhampered every third Thursday of the month in downtown Toronto.

The House of Horror is also slated to feature the world premiere of *Nightmare Picture Theatre*, Gudino and James Fisher's hour-long ode to Expressionist horror with a creepy combination of stop-motion cinema, live music and spooky theatre (Sunday, August 28 at 7:30 PM) as part of *Rue Morgue*'s Festival of Fear National Horror Expo in August.



A former funeral home becomes Rue Morgue's "final resting place."

"My hope is that the House of Horror comes to be looked at as a place that explores new and unusual avenues for the horror genre," comments Gudino. "We've already had a wedding and a photo exhibit here and I have other weird and dark events planned."

The Rue Morgue House of Horror will also be available to rent for specialty events; interested parties can acquire details by e-mailing *office@rue-morgue.com*.

Built by Sir William Speers at the turn of the century, the building situated at 2926 Dundas Street West in the Junction sector of Toronto – one of the oldest commercial centres of the city – operated as a thoroughfare for the deceased for roughly 100 years. Speers died in 1941 and subsequent building owners kept the funeral business alive until 2003; this past November, the magazine acquired it as its new home.

"Since the very beginning I've always thought of *Rue Morgue* as an actual destination, not only as a magazine," remarks Gudino. "The idea of acquiring a historical funeral home to be its final resting place has, of course, exceeded my greatest expectations."

Visit rue-morgue.com for details on upcoming screenings and events at the House of Horror.

Emma Anderson



Lions Gate throws weight behind indie zombie film

Call it the little zombie movie that could. *Fido*, a horror-comedy from Vancouver-based Anagram Pictures, rode the current wave of undead movies, from obscure indie project to a major distributor-backed project with Hollywood talent.

The film, which recently finished shooting in British Columbia, is set in the imaginary town of Willard, in an imaginary world reminiscent of 1950s America but where a war has been fought and won against the flesh-eating undead. An all-pervasive corporation called ZomCon has carved out a rather lucrative niche providing zombies – their flesh-ripping urges curbed by control collars – as civic workers, domestics and even pets. Timmy, a lonely 11-year-old who's thoroughly unimpressed with the "phony-baloney" world he inhabits, befriends his family's new zombie servant, dubbing him "Fido". When Fido's collar shorts out and he reverts to his gut-chomping ways, Timmy must go to great lengths to protect his new pal, even as freshly reanimated corpses, hunger intact, start roaming Willard's picturesque streets.



Fido. *A comedic allegory and parody of* Lassie

"One of the most interesting things is that there's a juxtaposition of this 1950s shiny-surface world that is quaint and happy and pleasant, mixed with this extreme violence," explains director Andrew Currie, who co-wrote the script with Robert Chomiak and Dennis Heaton. "It's a comedy and an allegory and it's a parody of boy-and-his-dog films like *Lassie* and *Old Yeller*, but at the same time it's got this political layer and the theme, which is about what it means to be alive and what it means to be a human being."



Photos by Michael Courtney

Currie adds that it was this unique world that attracted an impressive array of stars to the low-budget (a scant $8 million) project, including Scottish actor and comedian Billy Connolly as the titular lead zombie, Carrie-Anne Moss of *Matrix* fame, *O Brother Where Art Thou*'s Tim Blake-Nelson and ubiquitous Canuck character actor Henry Czerny.

"It functions on a few different levels," Currie notes, "and the cast that are in the film got that really clearly and loved that about the story – that's what drew them in."

While Anagram was negotiating with Lions Gate Films for the US theatrical release of Anagram's previous feature – the small-hit comedy *The Delicate Art of Parking* – they sent along a copy of the *Fido* script, which eventually landed on the desk of Peter Block, president of home entertainment, acquisitions and new media for Lions Gate. Bolstered by the resurgence of zombie movies and Lions Gate's track record of backing offbeat horror movies like the French thriller *High Tension* and Rob Zombie's *The Devil's Rejects*, Anagram suddenly had a hot property on its hands.

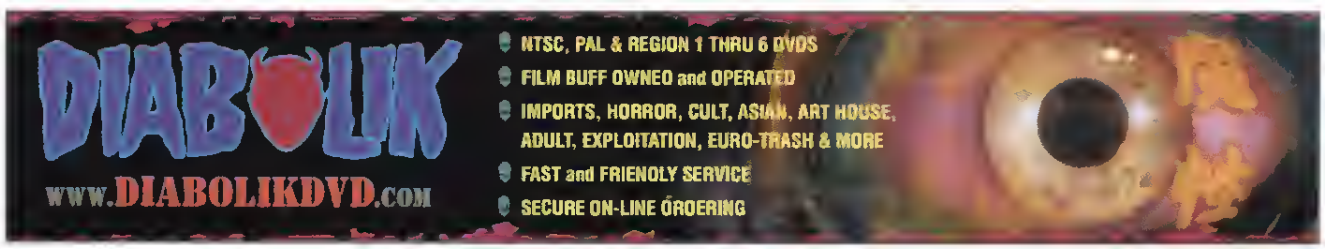
"When I flew down to LA to meet Peter Block and his associates, it really was the easiest meeting I've had – they loved the script and didn't want to change anything," Currie marvels.

He says that he and the other writers sought a complexity similar to Romero's *Dead* films, and he hopes the social and political themes contained therein will reach beyond the rotting apple pie America embodied by Willard.

"Setting it in that time and keeping it in this stylized world, it hopefully will resonate with different people in whatever situation they're in," says Currie. "Certainly America is not the only regime to boost fear as a way of controlling the masses."

At least *Fido* won't suffer by trying to compete directly with Romero's long-awaited sequel – the finished product arrives in theatres in the fall of 2006.

Scott Lingley



Dreadlines

ROADKILL

FROM THE INFO HIGHWAY

www.digitalapocalypse.com
Photographer Chad Michael Ward has captured evil in emulsion from Marilyn Manson to Fear Factory, but the landscape of his own jilted mind delivers some of the creepiest photographs we've ever seen. Put on a straitjacket and observe stills from his upcoming Pain Box series, shot in an abandoned asylum.

www.zombiehunters.org
In the unfortunate event of a sudden zombie apocalypse, this Missouri-based organization has your back covered. They offer everything from consultation services and a vast online knowledge base to a zombie-reporting hotline. Aim for the head.

www.batsday.net
For one weekend each year, the darkest of the dark descend upon the happiest place on earth and make it their own, an event that has come to be known as Bats Day at the Fun Park. Join hundreds of intrepid goths as they descend on Disneyland in August. The website includes event info and images from previous years' festivities.

www.realtechnews.com/posts/1487
Are werewolves prowling around your homestead? Fear not, for the internet is a bottomless repository of arcane knowledge. This site (and the links provided within) will give you a detailed step-by-step on how to cast your very own silver bullets. Lycanthropes be gone!

home.bresnan.net/~ravensblight/papertoys.html
Remember those kitschy paper cut-out toys from your childhood? The Toyshop gives them a macabre twist with their monster playsets, horror games, coffin gift boxes, and more. PDF files and detailed instructions to print and assemble the toys are supplied online and free of charge! Connect with your inner demon child.



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-compiled by Monica S. Kuebler
Got a Roadkill suggestion?
E-mail a link to: **roadkill@rue-morgue.com**

McKee and Bettis wrap May companion piece



Angela Bettis and Lucky McKee switch roles for ***Roman****.*

Lucky McKee and Angela Bettis, director and star, respectively, of 2002's much-lauded horror movie *May* (*RM#34*), have reunited for *Roman*, a low-budget companion piece that recently wrapped in Los Angeles. Both *May* and *Roman* were written around the time McKee was in college and designed so that either could stand as the director's first feature. When *May* came together first, McKee decided against directing *Roman* himself.

"One's the story of a lonely girl and the other one's a story about a lonely guy," McKee tells *Rue Morgue*. "Since I did *May*, I felt directorially I wanted to do something different."

McKee says he came up with the idea that Bettis would direct and he would act, because *Roman* and *May* are "brother and sister movies set in the same universe emotionally."

Roman concerns a lonely welder who longs to meet the girl that walks by his window every night. Afraid to talk to her, he eventually meets her by chance, but things quickly take a turn for the worse.

"Something terrible happens between them which he has to carry around with him for the entire movie," McKee explains. "It's very much a movie about guilt. There are some grisly moments and some grisly ideas put in your head, but [we're] definitely just trying to make it an emotional piece of art."

Combining elements from Hitchcock's *Rear Window*, *Psycho* and *Vertigo*, *Roman* was shot "nitty-gritty" on digital video in McKee's apartment building complex over three weeks this past April.

"We just have this immense trust with each other. Because I wrote the script also, it's a trip to be in that seat as opposed to the director's seat, which I'm used to. But to be exploring your story from within like that and being in the middle of it – it definitely messes with your head and you kind of question where it all comes from."

McKee also says *Roman* was a welcome break from his follow-up to *May*, *The Woods*, which he shot for MGM at the end of 2003 in Montreal. The period horror film, set at an all-girls school and co-starring Bruce Campbell is set for release next month.

"I think people will dig it," McKee predicts. "It's a throwback in a lot of ways. It takes place in 1965, and has a real vintage feeling. It doesn't look like a Japanese horror movie, which I'm pretty proud of," he adds, laughing.

In the meantime, McKee is keeping himself busy. He recently wrote a vampire script and produced long-time collaborator Chris Sivertson's adaptation of the Jack Ketchum novel *The Lost*, which he says should be ready for a late 2005 release. He's also planning to direct a film version of Ketchum's novella *The Passenger* (about a victim trying to escape murderous kidnappers) in the fall of 2005, again starring Bettis, as well as Ben Boyer, Justin Stone and Ketchum himself (as Dallas Mayr). Both Lucky and his father Mike McKee will also make appearances in it.

Roman does not currently have distribution but, like *May*, McKee hopes to "just get the film out there" and see if anyone bites.

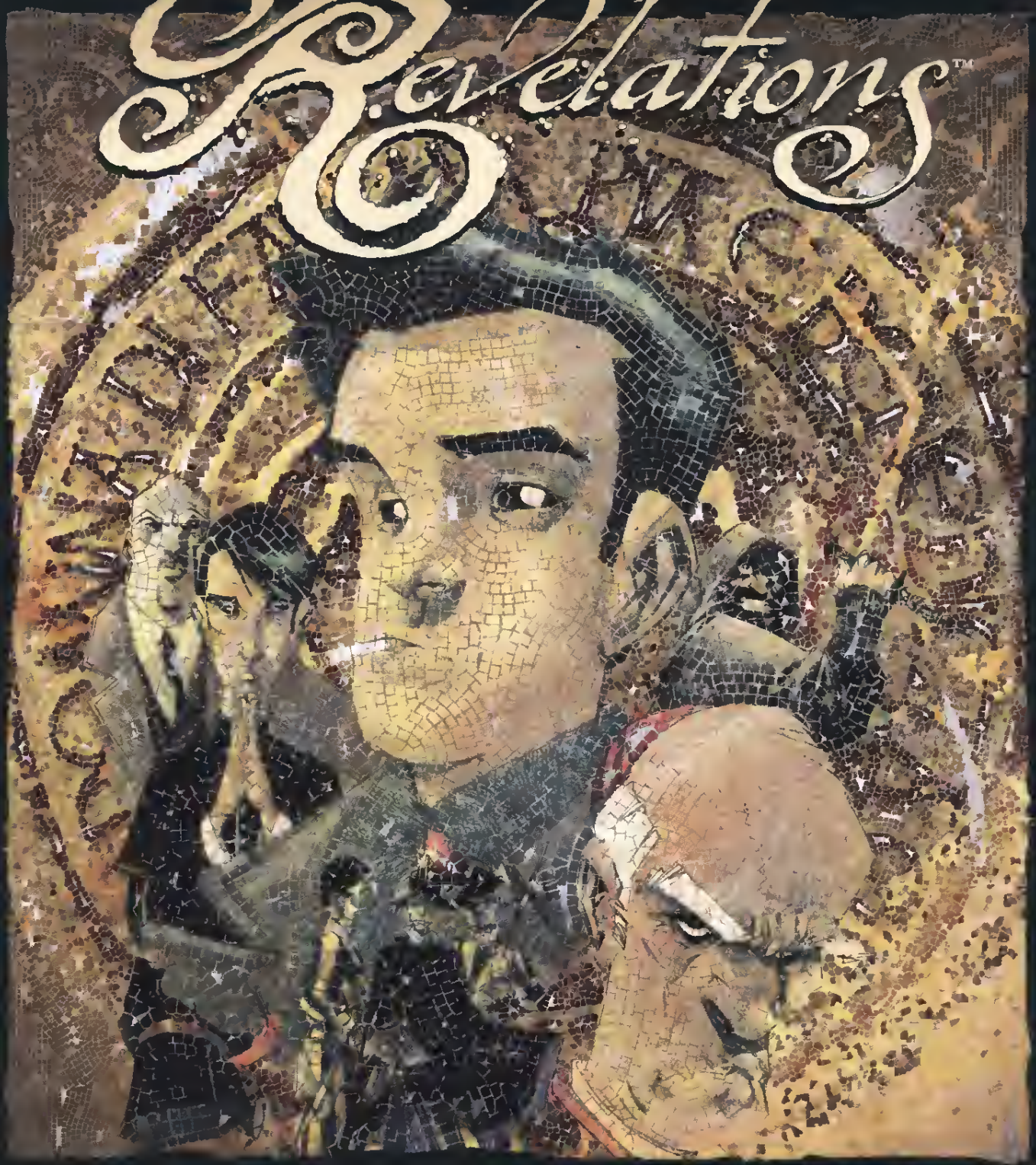
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DARK HORSE COMICS

THE CORONER'S REPORT 13

Weird Stats
Morbid Facts

+ Necromancy is the act of divining the future through the use of the dead. In its earliest forms it is believed to have involved cutting open a corpse and using the body's innards to perform psychic readings (much as one would read tea leaves).

+ For the filming of *Blood Feast*, H.G. Lewis required the fake blood to be edible, causing Barfred Cosmetics to alter their formula. What Lewis failed to tell his cast, despite assuring them that the concoction was harmless, was that its base ingredient was Kaopectate (an anti-diarrheal drug).

+ A bar of soap created by artist Gianni Motti is currently on display in Basel, Switzerland. Motti claims to have made the bar from the fat removed from Italian PM Silvio Berlusconi during a recent liposuction treatment, which was supplied by an inside source at the facility where the operation occurred.

+ Freddy Krueger's name was inspired by a neighbourhood boy who had attempted to beat Wes Craven up when he was a child.

+ The 1902 volcanic eruption of Mt. Pelee killed all but one of the residents of St. Pierre. Only Raoul Sarteret survived; he was serving out his sentence for murder in a dungeon that sheltered him from the worst of the eruption.

+ During the filming of *Braindead* (a.k.a. *Dead Alive*), the jacket donned by actor Ian Watkin in the role of Uncle Les became so soaked in fake blood that it was able to stand upright even when not being worn.

+ In the 13th century, philosopher Thomas Aquinas argued that a woman could, in fact, become impregnated by an incubus (a demon that purportedly has sexual intercourse with women while they sleep).

+ When a hurricane that killed hundreds pounded South Carolina back in 1893, many were able to survive by strapping themselves to large trees.

+ The Snack-Time Cabbage Patch Kid doll was manufactured with a fully-functional jaw. In 1996, one of these dolls chomped onto a child's hair and "ate" its way up to the girl's scalp where it subsequently had to be detached by paramedics.

+ Horror director John Carpenter is not the only one in his family to achieve fame; his great-great-great uncle invented the elevator.

+ Bram Stoker, in his acclaimed novel *Dracula*, was the first to introduce the fictional idea that vampire bats could cause vampirism.

+ 1937 marked the year of the last public execution in the United States but, in 2001, Timothy McVeigh's execution became the first to be broadcast over closed-circuit television.

+ Teratophobia is defined as the fear of monsters or giving birth to a deformed baby.

-compiled by **Monica S. Kuebler**
Got a weird stat or morbid fact?
Send it through to info@rue-morgue.com

The Rue Morgue SICK TOP SIX

Instances of BODILY BIFURCATION



1. **Day of the Dead**
   Rhodes' rib cage rip
2. **Damien: Omen II**
   Elevator evisceration
3. **Ghost Ship**
   Cruiseline cable carnage
4. **Ichi The Killer**
   Boot-blade bifurcation
5. **Jaws**
   Quint's Great White bite
6. **The Wizard of Gore**
   Sick torso trick



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THIS MONTH, AUDITION, THE MOVIE THAT BURNED POWERHOUSE DIRECTOR TAKASHI MIIKE INTO THE NORTH AMERICAN NERVOUS SYSTEM, FINALLY GETS THE RECOGNITION IT DESERVES.

PRELUDE TO PAIN

by TOM MES • Interview by JOVANKA VUCKOVIC

Three feet of piano wire? Check. A fistful of really long needles? Check. One pair of rubber gloves? Check. Butcher's apron? Check. Bottle of anaesthetic? Check. Dead dog in the living room? Check.

It's not fair to reduce a film to a single scene. Condensing the work of Takashi Miike to its most attention-grabbing moments is common practice, but nevertheless a vast underestimation of the man's talents. When it comes to ***Audition***, however, reducing the film to its unforgettable climax of creative acupuncture and imaginative dismemberment is a bit like reducing *Psycho* to the shower scene: the perfectly understandable reaction of a feverish mind eternally affected by a single movie-going experience.

There is much more to ***Audition***, of course. A single scene does not a classic make. This film stays with us for many reasons: the ethereal beauty of Eihi Shiina, whose fragile frame, demure demeanour and soft smile make the madness even more unbearable; the chilling look the film poses on a society where abuse is an easier option than communication; Ryo Ishibashi, former rock star turned one of Japan's greatest dramatic screen actors; his namesake Renji Ishibashi, leering in his wheelchair; the sexual politics, far more complicated than most people realized at the time; and, of course, that bag and its mutilated, vomit-fed contents.

Originally a product of the horror boom that swept Japanese cinema in the wake of Hideo Nakata's original *The Ring* (a.k.a *Ringu*), *Audition* was conceived by its producers as a different kind of horror film. And a different kind of horror film required a different kind of director. Enter a certain Takashi Miike, director-for-hire whose specialty lay in that staple of Japan's straight-to-video market, the yakuza movie. He had made the odd hybrid: yakuza/sci-fi (***Full Metal Yakuza***), sci-fi/teen movie (***Andromedia***), fantasy/road movie (***The Bird People In China***) and yakuza/manga/what-the-hell-is-that-anyway movie (***Fudoh: The New Generation***), but nothing resembling a *Ring*-type horror. And to ***Audition***'s producers, that was just as well.



"When you watch movies, you often feel a sense of relief because there is usually a promise between the audience and the film that you will not be betrayed. *AUDITION* doesn't promise that to you. That's why this movie is so scary."

TAKASHI MIIKE

Fast-forward twelve months to early 2000. ***Audition*** has received its international unveiling in Vancouver and is about to get its European baptism in Rotterdam: audiences run for the exits in droves during the film's finale, a distressed lady tells the director that he is a lunatic, and Miike just smiles and never once takes off his sunglasses. The two other films of his playing at the festival, ***Dead or Alive*** and ***Ley Lines*** – both screening to a foreign audience for the first time – receive a similar buzz. People re-enact ***Dead or Alive***'s out-of-this-world climax in theater lobbies and hotel corridors, and rumours begin to go around that this Miike guy directs at least four of these kinds of films a year. The press knows it's on to something. A week later, ***Audition*** walks off with two sets of critics' prizes. But by that time, the man with the shades is already back in Tokyo working on his next film.

And a phenomenon is born. This "film about cutting someone's foot off" (as the director himself refers to it) played at festivals around the globe, sending the more sensitive sections of its audiences fleeing for the doors and keeping the remainder in rapt attention. The film got picked up for general release and repeated the same pattern wherever it played, and eventually its reputation led to a flood of ***Audition*** bootlegs in North America, followed by several proper releases – the last is a now out-of-print Ventura/American Cinematheque edition that was available online and at specialty stores.

Now, six years after its initial, wince-inducing festival run, ***Audition*** gets the definitive special edition treatment from Lions Gate Home Video. Extras from the Ventura release – including an interview with director Takashi Miike, original theatrical trailer, director's commentary, biography/filmography of Miike and photo gallery – are here as well as a new director introduction, an interview with ***Audition*** novelist Ryu Murakami and Bravo's *100 Scariest Movie Moments* special in which Miike and ***Audition*** are highlighted.

So join us as we celebrate in these pages Takashi Miike and ***Audition***, a film that was the definitive breakthrough of a filmmaker who is incomparable in and out of the genre. But also a film that, along with Nakata's *The Ring* and Kiyoshi Kurosawa's *Cure*, has come to define an epoch in Japanese horror. And as we all know, it's an epoch that is still far from over.

Rue Morgue recently spoke with Takashi Miike through the aid of his Assistant Director and translator Shinjiro Nishimura on a break from shooting his new children's film ***Yokai Daisenso*** (literally translated: Hobgoblins and the Great Wall



Miike's Monster Revisited

1-ichi

Starring Nao Omori, Teah and Koji Chihara
Directed by Masato Tanno
Written by Sakichi Sato
Based on the manga by Hideo Yamamoto
Unearthed Films

No, a sequel to *Ichi the Killer* was not necessary. Director Takashi Miike's much-loved adaptation of the Hideo Yamamoto manga was so violent and so over-the-top that any further films about the crybaby assassin would inevitably pale against the bloody original. So how about a prequel instead?

1-Ichi shows us how Ichi became the number one killer, and it's a half decent time-waster that won't want to make you hit the fast-forward button. Director Masato Tanno, Miike's assistant director on a number of films including *Ichi*, is a competent technician whose prowess almost makes film snobs ignore the fact that this was shot on video. He also benefits from the return of *Ichi* scripter Sakichi Sato and Ichi himself, actor Nao Omori.



Sato sets the action in the tumultuous world of high school. Teah, star of Miike's *City of Lost Souls*, plays Dai, a tough student who has kicked the asses of all the local schools. Watching his fights is Ichi, a taciturn nobody so lacking in confidence that even the young kids in his martial arts class beat him up. Dai sympathizes with Ichi and protects him from bullies when he can. But there's a rage in Ichi we know is going to eventually blow.

Enter Onizame, a psychopathic new student with a penchant for erotic asphyxiation (not his own) and breaking arms. He's looking to overthrow Dai as the local tough guy but turns his admiring sights on Ichi after word gets out that the over-emotional pansy slaughtered the bullies who kidnapped him. The showdown between Dai, Ichi and Onizame brings the film to its (literal) climax.

1-Ichi does suffer in comparison to its predecessor, no question, and Omori, over 30 at the time of filming, doesn't exactly look like a teen. But the film does a great job of outlining the social and sexual frustrations that turn Ichi into a reluctant maniac, and Sato's script is full of black humour, not all of it, thankfully, in good taste. A low budget means the onscreen mayhem is modest but does little to dampen *1-Ichi*'s enthusiastic perversity. Maybe more Ichi wouldn't be so bad after all.

Sean Plummer



Audition: *Miike demonstrates the kindest form of torture.*

What was the reaction in Japan to Audition when it was first released?

There was no reaction. *Audition* was shown in some dead-end theaters gradually; atmospheres there were much scarier than the movie! [laughs]. What I mean is that *Audition* was shown in small theaters in a short-term run with little noticeable publicity. Japanese moviegoers didn't even know about *Audition* until they learned about its reputation from abroad. I really love that fact so much.

How much of Ryu Murakami's original story did you change?

Basically I didn't change his story, but I think that the movie is a different kind of horror than the original story because a movie can dominate an audience's life for two solid hours. The first half of *Audition* is about a man meeting a woman, which is very low-key and some might even feel is a little dull, but it's vitally important. I mean, we spend the first half getting to know these people, and the audience feels close to the lives of the characters in the movie. Then after an hour with them, *Audition* starts betraying the audience and going crazy. If your mom had a different personality suddenly one morning when you woke up, you would be very worried about it, you know? That's the idea. When you watch movies, you often feel a sense of relief because there is usually a promise between the audience and the film that you will not be betrayed. *Audition* doesn't promise that to you. That's why this movie is so scary. I think that's the difference between the film and the original novel.

Why was it important that Asami torture Aoyama so severely?

Well, because the script said so. I mean, that's Asami's will. Though I tried to stop her, she doesn't hear me. That's scary. However, if you think about it, she only does two things: one is sticking thin needles to Aoyama's body saying: "Kiri kiri kiri kiri kiri kiri kiri kiri kiri!" and the other is cutting off his left leg. That's all. That's the kindest method of torture in horror movie history, ever. Usually a head is bitten off, and internal organs and blood are splashing out, right?

So then what is the most horrifying aspect of Audition for you?

The most horrifying aspect of *Audition* for me is that the fear is from neither grudge, hate, nor rising dead men.

Do you think violence is more violent when it is sexual violence?

Yes, I do. Sexual violence is kind of taboo in the modern era. That's why people think that violence is more violent when it is sexual violence. If this was 1000 years ago, people might have thought sexual violence in the movies was like home drama.

Have you ever been censored?

I'm sure I have. I hear that when censorship guys hear my name, they tend to brace themselves. To be honest, I don't care at all if I get censored. I wanna say to them: "Don't be shy to censor my movies, I understand that is your job."

Audition was your first international breakthrough, things must have changed for you after that.

Yes, they did, and I really appreciate that. Japanese people really care about reputations overseas. The reason is that maybe we are not confident in ourselves. I've become a top-notch B-movie director. Many directors are not allowed to go crazy like me, and it's all because of my popularity overseas.

CABIN FEVER DIRECTOR ELI ROTH RELATES HIS EXPERIENCE DIRECTING TAKASHI MIIKE IN HIS UPCOMING FILM *HOSTEL*.



A DAY WITH MIIKE

by ELI ROTH

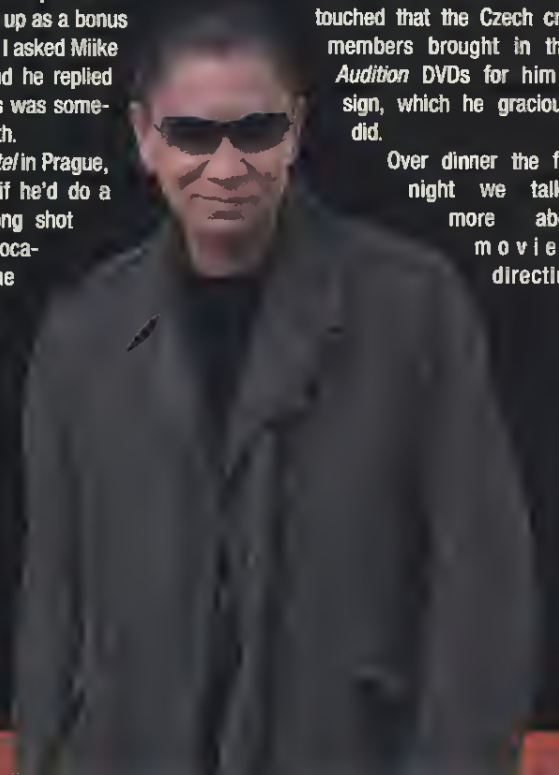
Like many cinephiles I discovered Miike three years ago when I saw *Audition* and have since become a rabid fan. I even had Howard Berger from KNB FX make me up as Kakihara from *Ichi the Killer* for the *Cabin Fever* premiere. Then I had the good fortune of meeting Miike last summer when he was in Los Angeles doing press for his film *Gozu*.

To me, Miike was not just from Japan, he was from another planet. He was this mysterious figure churning out one sick masterpiece after another from the darkest corners of the world. When I showed up to meet him at his hotel there were two video cameras and a translator, who asked me to interview him. I was so excited that I invited Guillermo Del Toro to join us and the three of us had a really fun impromptu discussion about directing that wound up as a bonus feature on the *Gozu* DVD. When I asked Miike what his favourite film was and he replied "*Starship Troopers*", I knew this was someone I was going to get along with.

During pre-production on *Hostel* in Prague, I wrote Miike and asked him if he'd do a cameo. I knew this was a long shot because we were filming in a location that was a nine-hour plane ride from Japan, and Miike makes six movies a year, plus he's never done a role like this for an American film. But he wrote back, saying he'd be happy to do it. I didn't even send him a script or anything – he just said yes because he liked me and appreciated my help in promoting *Gozu*.

When he arrived on location, the whole crew was buzzing. Miike showed up with two gifts for me: a pair of squeezable rubber breasts and e ceramic kitten. The kitten, he explained, was for good luck, and the breasts were because he knew how difficult it is to date during a film shoot. Within five minutes we were taking pictures with chainsaws and joking around with the breasts. But then it hit me: I've got to direct this guy. Me. I've made one film. Miike's made close to 60. What the hell was I thinking?

What strikes me as most fascinating about Miike is that he genuinely seems to have no idea of the impact he has had on world cinema and how much film fans love him. The thought that some American filmmaker loved his work so much that they wrote him into their film totally blew his mind. He was also really touched that the Czech crew members brought in their *Audition* DVDs for him to sign, which he graciously did.



Over dinner the first night we talked more about movies, directing, his new children's film, my film *Hostel*, and how much *Audition* influenced everything about it. Miike also told me about how he shot *Visitor Q* in five days (I can't ever bitch about not having enough shooting days after learning that). I showed him a bunch of the dailies, and he told me that the film looked beautiful, but that it was too violent for him. Too violent for Miike? I felt like I must be doing something right.

The next day we shot his scene in English; he spent the morning rehearsing his lines with his translator and assistant director Shinjo. Miike does not speak a word of English, but he nailed it on the first take. He said he felt our directing styles were very similar in that we cast the right people in the roles and let them do their thing with as little interference as possible. He made me feel very, very comfortable directing him, and was happy to make any minor adjustments I asked for.

After we shot his scene, Miike sat down with my brother Gabe and did an extensive on camera interview for the DVD. Gabe asked him why he flew all the way from Japan to do this role, despite the fact that he's in the middle of a film, and his answer was simple: "Because Eli asked me to, and I know how important it was to him." He's that cool.

We wrapped for the day and then everyone on the crew posed for photos with Miike, which, again, seemed to really surprise him. We rode home in the van together and I got to show the clip from the Bravo special *100 Scariest Movie Moments* where I talk about *Audition* with Rob Zombie and John Landis. Miike had no idea this special even existed but he just smiled and related to me the only unscripted English words I heard him say the entire trip: "John Landis!" Turns out we're from the same planet after all.

Photos by Eli Roth

MIIKE'S EXTREMES

BOX

Starring Kyoko Hasegawa and Atsuro Watabe
Directed by Takashi Miike
Written by Haruko Fukishima
and Bun Saikou
Lions Gate

With a filmography that gleefully deals in various degrees of horror, gangster action, comedy, drama, even sci-fi, musicals and kids' fare, Takashi Miike is notorious for cutting through genres like a chainsaw through butter. However, he's also proven himself comfortable working in forms other than feature-length films. In addition to his television projects like *MPD Psycho* (see p.22), the prolific Japanese director recently made a lavish short for an Asian horror compilation called *Three... Extremes*, which Lions Gate is releasing later this year. Titled *Box*, the film shows a different side of Miike, but one no less affecting than his previous wild work.

Clocking in at well under an hour, the short follows a reclusive writer haunted (literally) by the death of her twin sister. Years earlier when they were children working as a contortionist duo in a sideshow run by an older man, they specialized in a trick where they'd be locked in boxes smaller than the average suitcase. After an accident leads to tragedy, the remaining sibling suffers nightmares (or are they more than that?) of being suffocated. When a vengeful figure from her past returns, reality and nightmare bleed into each other.

What could've been a glorified, weirder than usual *Twilight Zone* episode, becomes a beautiful, sad and ultimately surreal horror fairy tale in the hands of Miike (and cinematographer Kôichi Kawakami). There are slight touches of J-horror ghost imagery, but the film is dominated by stunningly rich, emotionally driven dream imagery that has been rightfully compared to the work of David Lynch. Although just as unsettling and obtuse as Lynch, *Box* benefits from Miike's distinctively twisted Japanese approach to Shakespearian-grade tragedy. It's the director at his most serious, proving once again that no other filmmaker working right now is as successful at being so versatile.

Dave Alexander





*Asami performs some creative acupuncture on a victim in **Audition**.*

You are considered a renegade filmmaker in North America; what do people think of you back home?
Renegade filmmaker... I have to apologize to you because I am currently making a "family movie!" [Laughs] Like I said before, people didn't notice me back home until I was noticed abroad.

You have said in the past that you will never make a movie in North America, regardless of how much money you are offered. Do you still feel this way?
There are some misunderstandings with that actually. I didn't mean that I won't ever make a film in North America. I think that even if I have enough energy to make movies there, I'd better do my best here with that energy. I have been working self-indulgently so far, so it's hard for me to be controlled by big organizations and still make good movies. However, I am not stubborn, so if I meet good guys over there and we work together, I can do okay. I am tough enough to make movies with them.

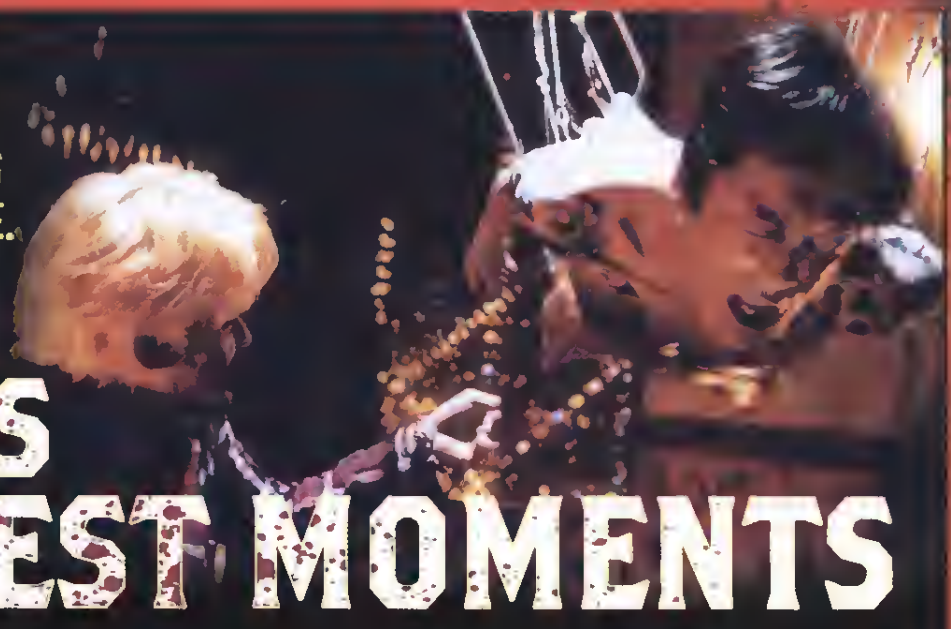
Are you in any way influenced by films from the West?
Of course, yes. Not only Japanese culture but Asian culture in general has been in some way influenced by Western culture. Western movies especially play the role of introducing us to its culture. People over here are fascinated with many Western movies. In my generation, there were various movies around us from Bruce Lee's *Enter the Dragon* to [Theo Angelopoulos'] *O Thiassos*. But I was actually not a big fan of movies. In fact, I'm still not crazy about movies.

Then why are you a film director?
When I graduated from high school I had nothing to do. I wanted to escape from the hardship of real life, so I went to a film school which anyone could enter. But there was no real reason to enter a "film" school in particular. I didn't want to make movies, I just had nothing to do. I realized only two days after I entered the school that it wasn't interesting to me. The first thing a teacher said was that scripts were art. That sounded ridiculous so I started working on sets. I had been doing that for ten years [before] I became sort of a film director.

What was it like being directed by Eli Roth?
I had great time in Prague, Eli's passion for movies made me feel younger. *Hostel* will be a powerful movie, I'm really looking forward to seeing it.

Do you see yourself primarily as an artist or a commercial filmmaker?
I am commercial B-movie mock director, art is

FEW FILMMAKERS HAVE RAISED CREATIVE CRUELTY TO THE HYSTERICAL HEIGHTS ACHIEVED BY TAKASHI MIIKE. HERE ARE A FEW OF HIS CHOICEST CUTS.



MIIKE'S MEANEST MOMENTS

BY OWEN LIVERMORE

To say Takashi Miike's films are violent is a gross – and we mean *gross* – understatement. But to call Miike a violent filmmaker would simply not do justice to the director's work. The often astounding examples of bloodshed in his films serve a greater good, affirming a sense that, in a Miike film, anything can happen. And it usually does. In appreciation, *Rue Morgue* presents ten of the most transcendentally torturous sequences in the director's depraved oeuvre.

1. CREEP-FRIED

– *ICHI THE KILLER* (2001)

If you wake up one day, and you're hanging by chains hooked into your flesh, and you see someone in front of you cooking food in boiling oil, odds are that you're not going to have a good day. The torturer is Kakihara (Tadanobu Asano), a sadist and closet masochist with a penchant for long sharp needles. The victim soon gets the, er, point.

2. GRUE ROMANCE

– *AUDITION* (1999)

It's the finale that defined Miike's status as a filmmaker, and is exceptional for its suggestive power and quiet, unsettling dread. Piano wire amputations and eyeball pincushions – need we say more?

3. WASTED

– *DEAD OR ALIVE* (1999)

In arguably the most disturbing sequence from the film, a stripper and member of a splinter gang is tortured and unceremoniously drowned in a pool of her own waste. In a move characteristic of Miike's work, the grisly death seriously questions the pleasure gained from other scenes of violent imagery in the film.

4. FOOTLOOSE

– *ICHI THE KILLER* (2001)

The seriously messed-up title character does a lot of damage with the foot blades on his superhero costume – from surgically precise amputations to mass disembowelments – but saves the worst for a violent pimp, who he cuts in half... vertically. The delayed reaction of the victim separating is a typical Miike touch.

5. A LOW BLOW... DART

– *FUOOH: THE NEXT GENERATION* (1996)

While the idea of a woman assassinating someone with a dart fired from her own genitals is hard to believe, you have to appreciate the originality.

6. BURSTING WITH FLAVOUR

– *DEAD OR ALIVE* (1999)

In the dizzying opening sequence, we see and hear the excesses of the Japanese urban underworld rendered in symbolic fashion by, among other things, a man consuming bowl upon bowl of noodles in a restaurant. These shots are followed by the arrival of armed gangsters, who subsequently shoot the man in the back, sending a stream of noodles toward the camera. Stylistically yummy.

7. DEATH TO POOCHIE

– *GOZU* (2003)

In an effort to protect his boss, a delusional yakuza (Sho Aikawa) takes matters into his own hands when he suspects that a cute little chihuahua is actually a trained killer. The rest of the gang watches in disbelief as Aikawa's character beats it into oblivion. Typically disturbing and hilarious.

8. SHORT-SIGHTED SADISM

– *SHINJUKU TRIAD SOCIETY* (1995)

Sadistic gangster Shu-Ming Wang (Tomorowo Taguchi) grows impatient while his henchman negotiates for a cut of illicit funds. Wang lives by the simple motto: if you're having trouble getting what you want, nothing works like the classic eyeball pluck.

9. A BULLET (OR THREE) IN THE HEAD

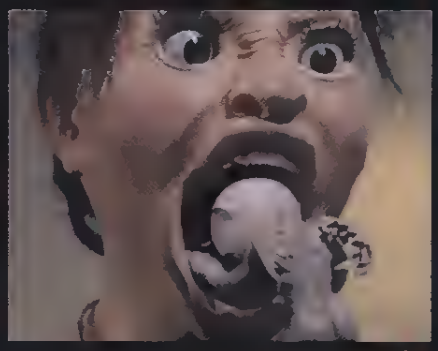
– *DEAD OR ALIVE 2: BIRDS* (2000)

A dwarf is surrounded by three assassins, who simultaneously shoot him in the head. The camera then zooms in on the victim's cranium, low-rent *CSI* style, as the three bullets pierce his skull. Just to be sure, an animated diagram confirms the perfect angle of the three shots. It's mind-blowing – pun intended – in its weirdness.

10. "WAITER, THERE'S A FLYING MONSTER IN MY SOUP!"

– *THE HAPPINESS OF THE KATAKURIS* (2001)

In the beginning of this sort-of remake of the 1998 Korean film *The Quiet Family*, an impish claymation creature inexplicably emerges out of a woman's soup. Upon seeing her screaming, open mouth, it mistakes her uvula for a heart, dives in and yanks it out. Wallace and Gromit were never this nasty.



TV CASUALTIES

MPD: PSYCHO

Starring Naoki Hosaka,
Tomoko Nakajima and Rieko Miura
Directed by Takashi Miike
Written by Eiji Otsuka
Adness America

To paraphrase Forrest Gump, Takashi Miike is like a box of chocolates; you never know what you're gonna get. From singing and dancing zombies (*The Happiness of the Katakuris*) to crazy Yakuza violence (*Deadly Outlaw: Rekka*) to a *Ringu* rip-off creepier than *Ringu* (*One Missed Call*), the Japanese auteur's versatility means even his uneven works hold surprises. *MPD Psycho* is no exception. Made for Japanese TV, this digitally-shot six-part miniseries is an adaptation of the Eiji Otsuka manga that's both enigmatic and beautiful. Translation: it looks great but what the hell is going on?

The first two parts, collected here, begin with Episode One, Memories Of Sin/Drifting Pedals, which introduces Yousuke Kobayashi (Hosaka), a detective whose wife is killed by serial killer Nishizono Shinji. The shock splits his psyche in two, creating Kazuhiko Amimiya, a cool as ice profiler who murders Shinji. Or does he? Years later, new bodies bearing Shinji's trademark – victims' skulls are cut open and a flower planted in their exposed brain – reappear. Shinji's murderous spirit, it seems, is alive and jumping from person to person.



Episode Two, How To Create A World, follows newly reinstated Kobayashi/Amimiya as he investigates the murders of pregnant women with barcodes tattooed on their eyeballs, their babies cut out of them. Again, it's a recurring crime seemingly committed by Shinji. Weirder: the babies are kept alive in order to reincarnate Lucy Monostone, a dead American '60s-rocker-turned-terrorist, who figures in here somehow. It's confusing, but the answers may lay with the July release of more episodes.

Although Miike's more outrageous imagery has been digitally masked (the masters were blurred by Japanese television censors), *MPD Psycho* is incredibly violent, and it preserves his unique sensibility. The plot's many surreal threads recall *Twin Peaks*, albeit tempered by the mechanics of a *CSI*-style police procedural, making for truly must-see TV.

Sean Plummer





Audition is "a movie about cutting off someone's leg," says Miike.

"I AM A COMMERCIAL B-MOVIE MOCK DIRECTOR; ART IS MYSTERIOUS AND UNBEHELD. I DON'T TRUST PEOPLE WHO CALL THEMSELVES 'ARTISTS' AT ALL."
TAKASHI MIIKE

mysterious and unbeheld. I don't trust people who call themselves "artists" at all.

Most of your films are based on other people's stories, have you ever felt the desire to tell your own?

Of course. I have ego as well as other people do, so I have the desire to make movies from my own original stories, but I don't want to stop my time to do that. If I have the talent, it will come to me naturally some day.

Tell us about your episode of Mick Garris' Masters of Horror.

It's going to be about horror in Japan, and entirely shot in Japan. It's a one-night story between an American traveller and a Japanese prostitute who has an unhappy background. The script is going to be written by *Audition's* screenwriter Daisuke Tengan.

Your newest film once again blends genres together but this time it's children's fantasy and horror. What can you tell us about it?

Its title for abroad hasn't been decided yet but the original title is *Yokai Daisenso*.

What does that mean?

Yokai is neither monster, ghost, nor zombie. It's a Japanese original conception. It's so hard to explain to you exactly what it is. You'll understand easily when you see the movie. This summer *Yokai Daisenso* will be shown in Japan widely, then it's going to the Venice Film Festival. You should check out its reputation after the festival. I wrote the script, so I bring all my movies together in it. It's a fantasy adventure with horror and comedy. i really hope you guys enjoy it.

You once said: "By filming human beings it naturally becomes a horror movie", the implication being that humans have a lot of horror inside them. What exactly did you mean by that?

You don't have to think about it deeply, just look inside your heart. Hey, did you find it? Can you see evil hiding there in the corner? Its face is yours, isn't it? That's why we need laws to keep society and not break order, but it can't stop us entirely. Though we rely on religion and God, a human being is just a human being itself.

We heard that you are not planning on making any more horror films. Is this true?

Yes. I said that at a press conference for *One Missed Call*, but the next one I made was also a horror movie – *Box*. Well, I am a liar with flabby will!


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LEAVING FRESH TRACKS ALL OVER THE MEDIA THIS SUMMER, **BIGFOOT** – NORTH AMERICA'S MOST NOTORIOUS MONSTER – IS ONCE AGAIN IN THE LIMELIGHT. *RUE MORGUE* TAKES A LOOK BACK AT THE LEGENDARY BEAST'S SPOTTY LEGACY IN THE MIDST OF ITS RETURN TO POPULARITY.

SUMMER OF SASQUATCH

BY ANTHONY PERTICARO AND DAVE ALEXANDER

The world is overrun with monsters. Scotland has its legendary creature in Loch Ness; eastern Europe has vampires and werewolves; Tibet has the Yeti, Mexico the Chupacabra – all countries have traditionally had their indigenous creatures of legend – except for the United States. Then Bigfoot stole into the public consciousness. For an extended period of time, the giant, ape-like creature became a huge deal in the US and the topic of a slew of sensational documentaries less concerned with the pursuit of science than with spinning a fabulous campfire tale such that, by 1976, the populace at large wondered (as the eerie 1976 documentary film *The Mysterious Monsters* asked), "Can a strange species of animal live undetected in the wilderness of America?"

While legends of giants and hairy creatures are nothing new, the name "Bigfoot" (a.k.a. Sasquatch in western Canada and environs) burst onto newspeper headlines for the first time in 1958 after a practical joke was perpetrated on a construction site near Willow Creek in northwestern California. According to strange phenomena axpert Mark Chorvinsky, a man named Ray Wallace, inspired by the world's fascination with the Abominable Snowman and monster B-movies of the time, allegedly imprinted numerous huge footprints in the ground outside a construction site. The incident made national news wires as many began to speculate that a giant creature – now dubbed "Bigfoot" due to a photo of the plaster of Paris casts of the creature's footprints – may be roaming the woods.

"Wallace was a notorious Bigfoot hoaxer," Chorvinsky said. "He was in competition with fellow hoaxer Rant Mullins. Wallace had taken numerous photographs of alleged 'real Bigfoot' creatures. He recorded a novelty album of Bigfoot sounds; he even had a guy in a Bigfoot suit at his wedding; and the legend starts at a construction site he owned. Yet, virtually no famous Bigfoot books over the last several decades even make a mention of him!"

Decades earlier Mullins had perpetrated the "Ape Canyon" incident, where a group of mountain men spending the night in the Oregon woods swore they were besieged by giant ape creatures that bombarded their cabin with boulders. Later, in 1979, Mullins admitted that, as a prank, he threw some stones at the cabin's roof on a bored 1924 night. However, it was after Wallace's joke officially created "Bigfoot" that folklorists built the legend by rewriting history.

"There were many oddball tales and legends in folklore and none of them had anything to do with Bigfoot," explained Chorvinsky. "But, after Bigfoot's 'birth' in 1958, many of these tall tales were rewritten, retold, or manufactured to feature Bigfoot. There was a publication entitled *The Bigfoot Casebook* that chronicled numerous Bigfoot sightings giving names, pieces, dates, etc. to events that occurred prior to 1958. Well, a fellow named Rick Moneymaker meticulously researched these reports to their source. What did he find? Several instances where the original version didn't feature a Bigfoot, but was about a bear, and then other stories where it was about a mountain man. In any event, the many historical Bigfoot sightings weren't originally Bigfoot sightings to begin with."

Nevertheless, interest in Bigfoot was growing, but it didn't truly explode until nearly a decade later, when the headline "Mrs. Bigfoot Filmed!" splashed across the front of the October 21, 1967 edition of the Eureka, California *Times-Standard* newspaper. Amateur inventor/promoter Roger Patterson and his friend Bob Gimlin filmed what appeared to be a female Bigfoot walking along a creek bed in the ironically-named Bluff Creek in the Six Rivers National Forest of northern California. Later, stills from the film appeared in the February 1968 issue of the long-defunct men's magazine *Argosy*, creating a sensation.

Now, outdoorsmen had a visual of the leg-

endary beast and the "Bigfoot boom" exploded as people took to the woods to hunt for the elusiva creature. The Patterson-Gimlin film had caused 1970s America to consider the possibility that a strange missing link may exist in the vast wilderness of the Pacific Northwest.

Today, the iconic footage doesn't hold up so well. In a 1996 piece for *Strange Magazine*, titled Tha Makeup Man And The Monster: John Chambers And The Patterson Bigfoot Suit, Chorvinsky theorized that the suit was built by legendary makeup effects wizard John Chambers, who was working on *Planet of the Apes* at the bime the footage was shot. This was later confirmed by Chambers' friend, filmmaker John Landis (*An American Werewolf in London*); then, after Chambers passed away in 2001, his family issued a statement confirming tha hoax. Finally, last year a costume designer named Phillip Morris told the *Charlotte Observer* he'd made the suit, and gave instructions to wear football pads underneath it to make it appear larger.

This doesn't even take into account the scientific community's declaration that the possibility of a seven-foot-tall missing link existing and living, in all places, California, was nil. That anyone questioned the validity of the most famous unexplained phenomena footage in history is irrelevant – it led to the renewed interest in Bigfoot – now also known as Sasquatch (from a term used by Coast Stalish indians), which culminated in the creature becoming a pop culture icon.

The curiosity the footage inspired led to an avalanche of books with titles like *1970: The Year of the Sasquatch*, so it was not long before the hairy biped became the subject of film. The first was the documentary titled, appropriately, *Bigfoot*. Originally released in the late '60s, the film has become lost, last seen airing on UHF stations in the aarly '80s. Amateurish and dull outings such as *Bigfoot: Man or Beast?* followed and put mabinee viewers into a deep snooze, as talented documentary filmmakers were not interested in exploring the subject. Fictional Bigfoot stories fared better, notably *The Legend of Boggy Creek* (1972), which earned $28 million (see p.29) with its then-innovative mockumentary style.

That is, until David L. Wolper came along. Wolper was among tha most respected documentary filmmakers in the world and produced numerous TV spacials that were financed by the Smithsonian Institute. Intrigued by the myth, Wolper approached the Smithsonian about producing a television special exploring the subject. He was turned down fiat, as the Institute's reply was "No reasonable person would be interested."





***On the Traii of Bigfoot**: A frame from the famed Patterson-Gimlin film, and (inset) the filmmakers with casts from Bluff Creek.*

But he persisted and was given a begrudging approval for the project, titled *Monsters! Mysteries or Myths?* In a perfect choice, Rod Serling was picked to host the special, and his understated, serious narration helped the proceedings immensely ("Do monsters exist or are they aberrations that only exist in the landscape of the mind?" he asked). The spooky special aired on CBS in 1974 and was a colossal hit, drawing 40-million viewars with its eerie depiction of a mysterious man-beast dwelling in the wilderness of America.

"No one could reach a number that high anymore, not in today's fragmented universe," the program's producer, the late Robert Guenette, noted during a phone conversation in 2002. "David Wolper was adamant about not second-guessing the audience. He opted to let the skeptics and believers have equal say. He didn't try to make those naiva enough to believe in Bigfoot look foolish. I think that approach was the nucleus for a very successful documentary."

Wolper also knew how to package the beast. In one of the more outlandish sequences, a Bigfoot creature, played by Richard Kiel (see sidebar, p.26) – who would go on to fame a year later playing Jaws in *The Spy Who Loved Me* – terrorizes a group of sleaping boy scouts. This was balanced by the presence of anthropology Professor Grover Krantz, who toured the globe presenting his case that Bigfoot creatures are the last remaining examples of Gigantopithicus (prehistoric ape men).

Before passing away in 2002, Krantz explained, "I began minor study of the subject of the Sasquatch in 1962; serious work in 1968. My first on-camera exposure was shortly after I published an article for a university publication and I never gave it a thought as to whether more interviews would follow. That article, by the way, outraged a particularly powerful professor in my department and i almost lost my job as a result. Now, whether or not I was truly taken seriously by the producers of these programs, i cannot say because behind the scenes is a place parbcipants never go."

Bigfoot continued to gain ground in the public imagination, and the success of the TV documentary led Guenette to make a film based on the program, called *The Mysterious Monsters*. Liberally recycling footage from *Monsters! Mysteries or Myths?*, the film opens with a tantalizing shot of the creature, then presants testimony from Krantz, Kiel's outlandish sequence, a variety of evidence including the famous Patterson-Gimlin clip, alleged sound records of the monster and footprints. The film was soaked in atmosphere that made it a smash on the drive-in circuit, which in turn opened the floodgates for more Bigfoot. The myth stood tall in '70s pop culture, with more books, movies and specials to follow.

Bigfoot's popularity soon peaked, but quickly crashed at the end of the decade. it seemed people could only keep the faith for so long and, with no creature found after several years of searching, the public moved on. By the time things like Syd and Marty Krofft's kids' action show *Bigfoot and Wildboy*, Marvel Comics hero Sasquatch, and the Bigfoot monster truck all appeared in the late '70s, the creature didn't seem so chilling or mysterious anymore.

But America's great man-beast would not go so quietly. You'd be hard-pressed to find someone who hasn't heard of it and there's still enough of an audience out there that comic books, TV specials, websites and B-movies con-

ACTOR RICHARD KIEL TAKES US INSIDE THE JOHN CHAMBERS-CREATED SUIT TO TELL US HIS OWN BIGFOOT HORROR STORY.

MEMOIRS OF A MYSTERIOUS MONSTER

BY ANTHONY PERTICARO

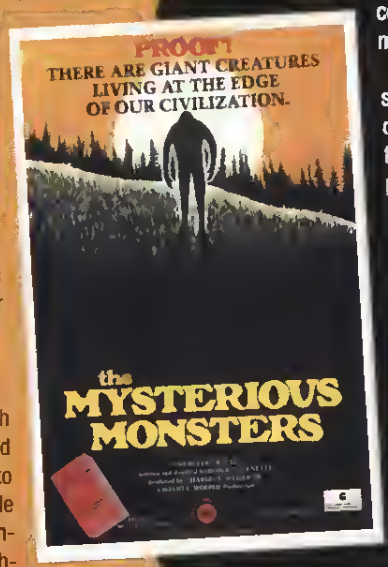
Richard Kiel is the unmistakable 7'2" actor best known for playing the villain Jaws in the James Bond films *The Spy Who Loved Me* and *Moonraker*, but in the infamous 1976 pseudo-documentary *The Mysterious Monsters*, he played a more iconic beast. Bigfoot.

***How'd you get involved with* Mysterious Monsters?**

John Chambers was a good friend of mine and he had done some facial and other body casts of me.

What's it like to play Bigfoot?

Filming the Bigfoot special for David L. Wolper was a very grueling experience To have spirit gum all over your face, arms and legs for nearly 24-hours straight was an ordeal at best. They actually glued the hair pads to my legs and when they ripped them off, they took the hair on my legs with the pads To this day I have areas of my legs with hair and other areas that are smooth as the hair was pulled out by the roots.



Was that the worst of it?

I was having a problem with my car overheating and I asked the production personnel to take it to a repair shop while we were filming. When we finished they said there was nothing wrong with it, so, still in costume, I took it out on the freeway around 3 AM to head back to the valley to get the costume removed There was nothing open at that time but I managed to wrap some rubber tape over the pinhole in my radiator hose, which was allowing the pressure to release and the car to overheat. I made it to within three blocks of my home when the tape blew off. After driving only for ten minutes, it overheated and stalled I parked the car and walked the rest of the way home, dressed like a giant ape creature.



(Above) "Bigfoot" departs in the Patterson-Gimlin footage, and (below) Canadian Sasquatch researcher John Green.

tinue to appear. Since the Patterson-Gimlin footage, there have been Bigfoot sightings in every state except Hawaii, and in eight Canadien provinces, particularly in British Columbia (which also lays claim to a Loch Ness Monster-like creature called the Ogopogo), where the Kokanee beer company co-opted the creature as a mascot.

Of course, even monsters come and go in cycles and in 2005 Bigfoot is back in vogue. This past spring a Manitoba man unveiled blurry video footage of what he claims is a Sasquatch, just as Fred Tepper's *Sasquetch Hunters* hit video stores, one of the first films to recast the legendary creature as a homicidal monster. Currently several movies are in production or development, including one based on the *Bigfoot* comic book by Steve Niles and Rob Zombie in which the titular creature kills a boy's mother and father before his traumatized eyes. The hairy biped is also slated to appear in composer Lalo Schifrin's son Ryan Schifrin's *Abominable* an out-and-out horror film, and Karl Kozak's *The Unknown*. In a lighter turn of events, the makers of *Napoleon Dynamite* have announced their next project will be called *The Sasquatch Dumpling Gang*.

Despite the sudden surge of interest from genre filmmakers, America's man-monster is, for some, still a serious subject; artist/academic Jill Miller spent most of the summer camping in northern California with surveillance equipment for a project called Waiting For Bigfoot (waiting-forbigfoot.com).

"While horror films manipulate our feelings of isolation or fear of the uncanny and the supernatural," Miller offers as part of her artistic statement on her website, "the cultish following of mythical monsters such as Bigfoot or Loch Ness point less to a culture of fear and more to e culture of faith. Not unlike religkius debate, cryptozoology culture raises questions of belief and faith, prompting us to take a stand."

Given the rise of the religious right in the US, her explanation may explain Bigfoot's surge in popularity.

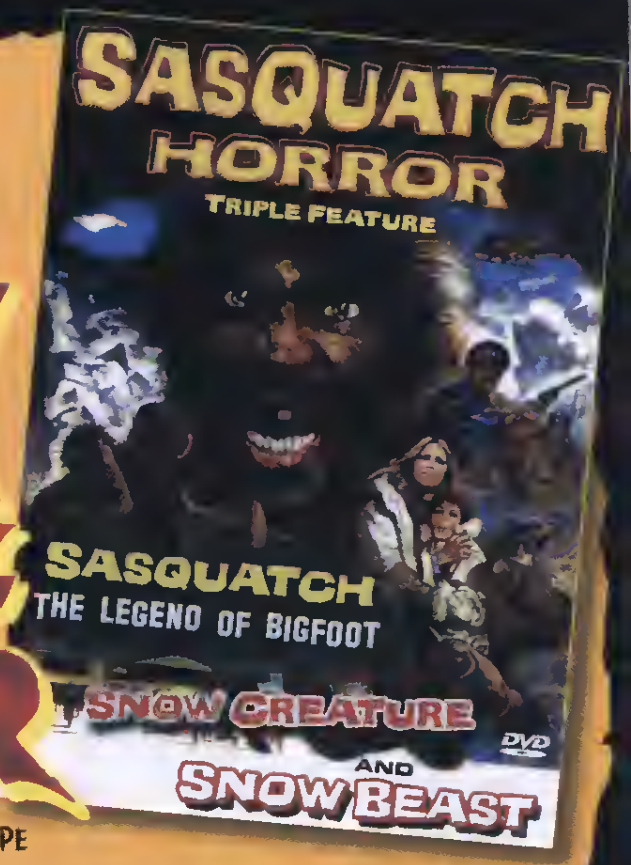
Chorvinsky put it more succinctly, though: "Bigfoot hunters are in denial."

All the interviews for this article were conducted by Anthony Perticaro, a contributor to Strange Magazine, e *publicetion devoted to "exploring strange phenomena."*



RETROMEDIA'S LATEST DVD MONSTER MASH-UP, *THE SASQUATCH HORROR COLLECTION* SHOWCASES THREE WILDLY DIFFERENT TAKES ON THE BIGFOOT PHENOMENON. ABOMINABLE? NOT QUITE, BUT IT DOES DISPENSE A TRIPLE DOSE OF HIRSUTE – OR MORE ACCURATELY *HAIR-SUIT* – MAYHEM.

A HAIRY TRIPLE HEADER



BY PAUL CORUPE

SASQUATCH: THE LEGEND OF BIGFOOT (1977)

Starring George Lauris, Steve Boergadine and Jim Bradford
Directed by Ed Ragozzino
Written by Ed Hawkins

In the tradition of *The Legend of Boggy Creek*, this poker-faced docudrama opens with the infamous 1967 Patterson-Gimlin Bigfoot footage before it follows a party of monster hunters deep into Sasquatch country – or at least a state park in Oregon. The narrator pads out the laborious journey with gratuitous monologues about the beauty of nature, but things get more exciting with original footage of the expedition being attacked by cougars and grizzly bears. When they aren't fending off wild animals, the team sits around the campfire trading legends of past Bigfoot-inflicted mayhem, but any illusion of Sasquatch sincerity is quickly killed by contrived humour courtesy of the crew's hard-luck cook. After what seems like forever, the team finally arrives right in the heart of the Sasquatch's snow-capped mountain domain and load their guns with tranquilizer darts for a rousing, if somewhat artificial finale. There's really no disguising the fact that Sasquatch is more fiction than fact, but as long as you can accept it for what it is, this film makes for a satisfactory – and occasionally suspenseful – Bigfoot experience.

SNOW CREATURE (1956)

Starring Paul Langton, Leslie Denison and Teru Shimada
Directed by W. Lee Wilder
Written by Myles Wilder

The Abominable Snowman made his untlattering silver-screen debut in this yawner shot by W. Lee Wilder, Billy's hopeless older brother and the man behind abysmal sci-fi dreck *Killers From Space* and *Manfish*. *Snow Creature* also starts out in pseudo-documentary style, as narrator Dr. Parrish's (Langton) Himalayan botanical expedition is sidetracked when a Yeti kidnaps the wife of one of his guides. Parrish tracks down and subdues the creature in his icy cave, and sends him back to the United States in a refrigerated crate for further study. On relocating stateside, this plodding and boldly brainless movie suddenly changes gears into a poverty-row *Them!*, as the beast predictably breaks loose and runs amok in the damp sewers of downtown Los Angeles. The laughable *Snow Creature* costume appears to be constructed entirely from carpet samples and used wigs, but even worse, it isn't really given anything to do. Instead, *Snow Creature* fixates on endless sequences of cops guzzling coffee while sticking pushpins into a giant map, and customs officials debating the immigration status of the Yeti; scenes that test the patience of even the most self-loathing B-movie masochist.

SNOWBEAST (1977)

Starring Robert Logan, Yvette Mimieux and Bo Svenson
Directed by Herb Wallerstein
Written by Joseph Stefano

In the first two films, trained experts had to spend several weeks in the remote wilderness before catching a glimpse of Sasquatch, but with *Snowbeast* Tony Rill (Logan) only has to head to the top of the bunny slope to find that his ski lodge's annual winter carnival has been crashed by Bigfoot. Scripted by *Psycho* screenwriter Joseph Stephano, this NBC movie-of-the-week from the 1970s owes almost its entire pedigree to *Jaws* – right down to the derivative "stalking" theme music – but it's an impressive piece of schlock nonetheless. Helping Rill is ex-Olympic skier Gar Seberg (cult favourite Svenson) and his wife Ellen (Mimieux), who are prompted into action after the creature thoughtlessly ruins the crowning of that year's Snow Queen. Capable TV veteran Herb Wallerstein delivers on the snowflake-thin premise with a dash of blood and some effective scares, making for an effortlessly entertaining late-night treat. Although there are only a few brief glimpses of the beast – it's obscured mostly through point-of-view shots – *Snowbeast* caps off this amusing collection with some wild and very wooly fun.

ASIDE FROM *HARRY AND THE HENDERSONS*, BIGFOOT MOVIES CAN BE AS ELUSIVE AS THE BEAST ITSELF... AND JUST AS BIZARRE. WITH THAT IN MIND, HERE'S A CROSS-SECTION OF SOME OF THE STRANGEST, SILLIEST AND MOST GENRE-DEFINING SASQUATCH FLICKS TO EVER SKULK ACROSS THE SILVER SCREEN.

BIGFOOT BASICS

BY CAELUM VATNSDAL

Debunked though it has been, there is still no greater Bigfoot movie than the 1967 Patterson-Gimlin footage; after the Zapruder film, it's the most famous home movie ever taken. Its shaky, blurry ineptitude set the standard, and thereafter no tripods nor sharp focus would be tolerated in the beloved subhuman sub-genre.

Proving this by negative example is Robert F. Slatzer's *Bigfoot* (Gemini-American Productions, 1971). Though Slatzer managed to assemble a formidable cast – including the great but unfussy John Carradine, Quebec-born Russ Meyer super-starlet Haji (playing the only role she could: "Haji"), and both the brother and son of laconic superstar Bob Mitchum – his beast-versus-bikers picture is sunk by an insistence on sharp-focus shots of the gorilla-masked antagonists. For apes, these entities have a curious M.O.: they like to kidnap people, particularly short-skirted blondes, and tie them to stakes in their primitive camp (studio set), presumably for use as breeding stock.

The film is bad, but nevertheless a small, pleasurable watershed in Bigfoot movie history. It offers a groovy, biker-music score, an enjoyably authoritative, hammy performance from Carradine, and a spooky scene in which the Hutterite-bearded Mitchum discovers oversized footprints by a stream. Though largely shot in a Hollywood studio, it makes a last-second bid for documentary cred with the vague closing credits assertion that "All outdoor sequences were actually filmed in various mountainous locations where 'BIGFOOT' has been documented and reportedly seen by several individuals," and, though predating the Sasquatch cycle of the 1970s, it anticipates them with this prescient sign-off: "The End... or is it just the beginning?"

It was indeed just the beginning. A year after the high-country shenanigans of *Bigfoot*, the genre would find its big footing in "the bottoms" with Charles B. Pierce's *The Legend of Boggy Creek* (Pierce-Ledwell Productions, 1972; now available from Hen's Tooth Video).

The film is set in the river basin around Fouke, Arkansas, the home of a parade of snaggle-toothed, corn-sucking good ol' boys and a chubby, hair-covered beast known as "The Fouke Monster." The film sets out a blueprint for many of the Sasquatch epics to follow: mushy photog-

LAMENESS OF THE LEGEND

BOGGY CREEK II: AND THE LEGEND CONTINUES (1983)

Starring Charles B. Pierce, Cindy Butler and Chuck Pierce
Written and directed by Charles B. Pierce
Elite Entertainment



Or, "Fouke you, too." Eleven years after his drive-in hit *The Legend of Boggy Creek*, and six years after a sequel he had nothing to do with (*Return to Boggy Creek*, 1977), Charles B. Pierce went back to the "bottoms" of Fouke, Arkansas, to hunt for the shaggy man-monster of the swamps once again.

This time, Pierce mostly jettisons the pseudo-documentary approach of the earlier picture, instead telling the tale of an anthropology professor (Pierce), his "freshman assistant" (Pierce's mostly topless son Chuck), plus two pretty if stunningly incompetent girls. The quartet finds a chilly reception in Fouke, not least from the monster itself, which routinely lunges out of the bushes to lurk around their pop-up trailer.

Eventually they end up at the broken-down dwelling of a fleshy, spectacularly bearded river rat called "Old Man Crenshaw", who has accidentally caught a young Sasquatch in his traps. Pierce and his crew, trapped by a storm, must confront both the angry adult Bigfoot and the hideous Crenshaw; fortunately, neither pose much of a threat.

The best that can be said for *Boggy Creek II* is that it's among the better fodder for the *Mystery Science Theatre 3000* crew. Their main targets – rightly so – are the shirtless performance of scrawny Chuck Pierce, the increasingly irritated glowering of his father and the short-shorts worn by most of the cast.

The newly released Elite Entertainment disc provides a reasonable version of the 1983 movie, though it still looks ten years older than it is. The only extra feature is a trailer, narrated by Pierce himself in the third person: "Award-winning producer Charles B. Pierce is proud to bring you the sequel to his classic motion picture *Legend of Boggy Creek*...", blah, blah. Recommended for those who can't live without the love of Bigfoot.

raphy, heavy on the voice-over, and a loose, primarily anecdotal structure.

Wa get lots of nature footage, a few comy folk ballads, and a number of set piece recreations which live to this day in the haunted minds of those who saw the film at an impressionable age. Squirral hunters, fishermen, girls at a "bunkin' party": no one is safe from the plump and synthetic prowling beast (add a diving helmet and you've got *Robot Monster*).



Pierce's picture was a runaway drive-in hit in the South, inspiring a host of imitators. The formal language of the Bigfoot picture was now set, and little time was wasted in grinding out more of these hirsute, pseudo-doc cheapias. *Boggy Creek*'s offspring included *The Mysterious Monsters* and *Bigfoot - Man or Beast?*, both from 1975; *In Search of Bigfoot* (1976); Ed Ragozzino's *Sasquatch* (see p.27); and *Manbeast! Myth or Monster* (1978). The movie inspired two direct sequels: *Return To Boggy Creek* and *Boggy Creek II: And the Legend Continues*.... None of these matched their inspiration in box-office impact, though images from Ragozzino's film wormed their way into many an adolescent psyche.

From the pseudo-docs we now take a sharp left turn into sheer Bigfoot insanity: the absurd, little-seen Italian-Canadian co-production *Yeti: The Giant of the 20th Century* (Stefano Film, 1977). Though the movie allied itself more with the previous year's *King Kong* remake than the ongoing Sasquatch cycle, it proclaims itself a Bigfoot film at every chance. "It's a Yeti, which the Americans call Bigfoot and we here in Canada know as Sasquatch," says the grandfatherly scientist in charge of defrosting the beast from his big ice cube. Never mind that it's anywhere from twenty to a 100-feet tall (the feeble effects have the mulleted creature flaccid in ona shot and toweringly erect in the next).

The beast is thawed, then flown to Hogtown and put on display at the top of the "Toronto Hotel". Exhibiting the same intolerance for flash photography as Kong, he breaks free and strolls over to city hall, stopping to observe the modernist architecture. Eventually, chased by cops in taxi cabs, he runs out of town to the nearby mountains, demonstrating conclusively that Italians know very little about Canadian geography.

If you thought the love scene in the DeLaurentiis *Kong* was laughable, get a load of *Yeti*'s take on it, which involves a giant inflating nipple and a huge fish bone used as a comb. The film is a cavalcade of camp bewilderment, with crazy dialogua, otherworldly actors, bizarre costumes and see-through special effects; the only thing that could amp up dementia of this calibre is a Canadian flag fluttering in the background of nearly every shot, and you get that too.

Madness was in the air, evidently, which is the only explanation for *Night of the Demon* (1980, available from Bijouflix). The unsubtle pleasures of this movie are numerous and involve hearty overacting, rivers of blood, an unremitting darkness of tone (not even Girl Scouts are spared) and kill scenes that make you want to slap yourself.

The story involves one Professor Nugent, who is leading a group of his anthropology students into the woods to find Bigfoot. This is the worst thing he could possibly do, and Nugent should know it, for he pauses regularly to tell tales of brutal death at the hairy hands of the Sasquatch. Here an old man has his arm ripped off, there a boogie-van tryst is rudely interrupted; or, in the most infamous scene, a motorcyclist stops to take a piss and a big mitt reaches out of the bushes to yank off his Johnson. Horrible stories all, but the gang prasses on undeterred.



Gruesome, bloody death awaits them, of course, and the only escapee is Nugent, though he's had half his face burnt off by the monster by tha time he makes it back to civilization. Naturally, he's declared insane and put away for life. The film's final message is the same as that of any Bigfoot movie worth its salt: he's still out there... lurking... somewhere in the woods...

One can only hope it's true.

BLAIR WITCH CO-CREATOR EDUARDO SÁNCHEZ TAKES HIS RETRO SASQUATCH STORY ONLINE

FERAL FLASH

After terrifying moviegoers in 1999 with a spirit in the woods, *Blair Witch Project* co-creator Eduardo Sánchez is revisiting fear in the forest with an online period project about Bigfoot. Called *Manabal'wak*, the 50-minute Flash-animated movie will be available later this year at www.manabalwak com at a cost of $0 99 USD per download.

"It's not about trying to emulate the *Blair Witch* success, because that's never going to happen again," says Sanchez. "It was kind of a lightning-in-a-bottle type situation."

Manabal'wak incorporates comic book-style computer animation, hand-drawn images, voice actors and a rich sound palette to create a cost-effective calling card version of a script Sánchez hopes to get turned into a regular feature film.

Dan Karcher, who designed the website for Sánchez's new live-action alien abduction feature *Altered*, is handling the animation.

"By the time we're ready to launch it live, *Manabal'wak* will have taken on a whole new dynamic in presentation," he says. "I tend to be rather self-conscious with rough cuts, but that's what Sánchez is tor, to keep me focused and seeing the big picture – no pun intended."

The movie, which *Rue Morgue* got a sneak peek at, opens dunng a snowstorm in the wilds of 1800s America. A steam train chugs through the woods, when suddenly a log on the tracks sends the cars careening into the night. As the bloodied survivors crawl out of the wreckage, different groups emerge. a group of black men and women travelling in a segregated car, racist, gun-toting woodsmen, and soldiers suffering a fractured chain of command. Tension and casualties mount, and then explode as something huge and hairy starts preying on them.

Sanchez explains, "It's a penod Sasquatch movie, if you can believe that, where just about everybody dies at the end."

Sounds like the kind of Sasquatch movie we like.

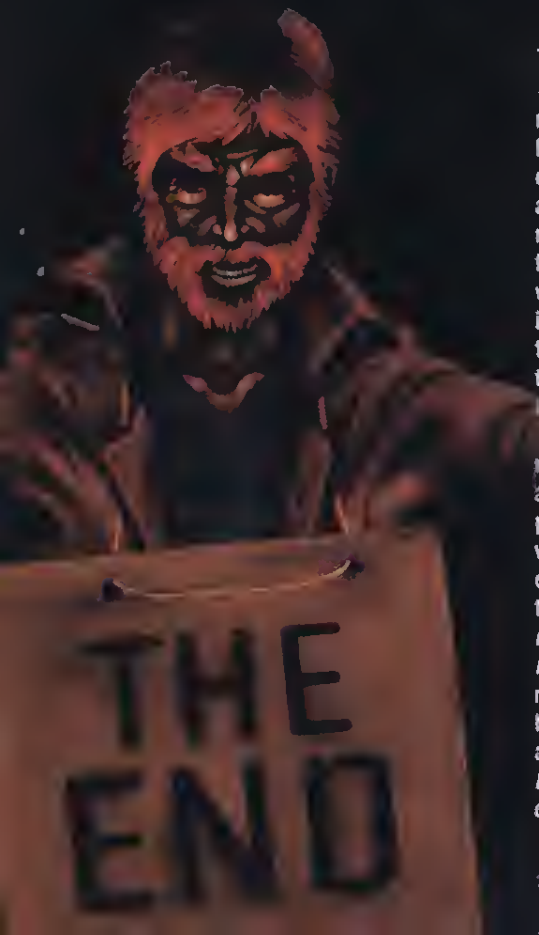
Dave Alexander

Illustration by Dan Karcher

WRITER/DIRECTOR BROOKE BURGESS DISCUSSES HIS NEAR THREE-YEAR STRUGGLE TO MAKE BROKEN SAINTS, THE MOST SUCCESSFUL FLASH-ANIMATED FANTASY-HORROR SERIES TO EVER GRACE THE WEIRD WIDE WEB.

DARK REVELATIONS

by JOVANKA VUCKOVIC



Philip K. Dick and William Gibson once prophesied about a ubiquitous digital territory called Cyberspace, an apocryphal, invisible infrastructure that connected every corner of the globe; through this each writer expressed a growing global technophobia. What they didn't predict, however, was just how much their fiction would one day become a reality. In a world that increasingly relies on the internet for its daily news, social life end, above all, entertainment, it's no surprise that modern storytellers are appropriating the technology to tell their own tales.

Over the last decade, a multimedia development tool called Macromedia Flash has become a standard device for animation on the web, but previously the software was commonly used in website design, for advertisements, e-greeting cards and, later, a handful of short cartoons like the James Farr's *Xombie*, David Firth's *Salad Fingers* and the successful animated gorefest *Happy Tree Friends*. That is, until Canadian maverick storyteller Brooke Burgess pushed the limits of the program's capabilities to create an ambitious twelve-hour animated series called *Broken Saints*; far and away the creepiest, most compelling story ever made with Flash.

"I'd always dreamed of making a miniseries along the lines of *Twin Peaks* or *The Prisoner*, or *The X-Files* when it was good," Burgess tells *Rue Morgue* from his home in Vancouver, British Columbia. "I love serial storytelling with operatic, creepy, cryptic style, but obviously couldn't afford or wait to pitch a TV series, so I got together with these young friends – one an artist, one a tech guy – and we were playing around with Flash, realizing that, although limited, Flash was very good at manipulating images, text and audio. So it seemed to make sense that we could manipulate the technology and make a long-form story using what Flash did well."

Back in 2001, Burgess, with the help of artist Andrew West and visual effects supervisor Ian Kirby, left his job as a producer at video game developer Electronic Arts Canada and used his severance package and stocks to make a mature, animated comic book in the vein of dark graphic novels like *Sandman*, *Dark Night*, *Watchmen* and *Swamp Thing*. The revolutionary show combined hand-drawn art, classic comic book text, hypnotizing music and animated stills to create the illusion of depth and movement. Each episode was then made available free of



"I'D ALWAYS DREAMED OF MAKING A MINISERIES ALONG THE LINES OF TWIN PEAKS OR THE PRISONER, OR X-FILES WHEN IT WAS GOOD."
BROOKE BURGESS

charge on brokensaints.com every three to four weeks.

The show's popularity grew exponentially with each chapter, eventually reaching over 40-million viewers worldwide and collecting a battery of awards along the way – including the 2003 Sundance Film Festival Audience Award for Online Animation.

"We devoted ourselves to it full-time – 40 to 60 hours a week from my Flash guy's basement up at the top of the street that I lived on," Burgess explains. "As our skills grew, we got more ambitious, and instead of shortening the time it took to create chapters, it ended up taking longer. It was a case of making the art, planning out simple Photoshop effects that would be mapped into Flash, adjusting the layers of the bitmap images and then laying down timelines that would either loop or stream the audio to a hopefully high quality so that people could fall into the hypnotic space of it."



Inspired as much by the dystopic writings of Philip K. Dick (*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, *A Scanner Darkly*), the graphic narratives of Alan Moore (*From Hell*, *Swamp Thing*) and Neil Gaiman (*Sandman*) as it is by the work of bizarro filmmaker David Lynch (see p. 56) and *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, *Broken Saints* tells a haunting and poetic tale about a techno-spiritual apocalypse in 24 chapters of varying lengths. Some chapters play out like storybooks, while others exist as seething, digital nightmares. Burgess says this marriage of technology, divinity, spirituality, politics and the evil of human nature were inspired by two recent news stories.

"Microsoft said back in '99 that within ten years they were going to launch a low-flying satellite network that would give free high-speed broadband wireless access anywhere on Earth, be you in the Sahara or the ice fields of Iceland or Luxembourg," says Burgess. "Every square inch of the earth would be geosynchronously monitored at all times by these satellites. Combine that with a study at Laurentian University in Ontario, Canada that has been going on now for almost 25 years in which a professor at the University had been sitting people down in this magnetic resonance imaging chair and firing [electro magnetic] pulses at their temporal lobes. He's been able to inspire in people – be they female, male, Christian, Muslim, atheist, Jew, it does not matter – a God Response. All people, when this certain part of the brain is stimulated, feel like the divine is watching them."

The technology-versus-spirituality connection led Burgess to craft a revolutionary work of art that revolves around four characters from completely different cultural/religious backgrounds who have the same or a very similar vision of an apocalypse.

"The four Saints are pulled together by destiny, by synchronicity, by serendipity, and realize that they are part of this horrific Machiavellian plan to implant chips into military officials, political officials and religious leaders to make them immune to a coming broadcast," he explains. "And that broadcast, along with holographic projections and EM fields, is going to make a specific segment of people – minorities, people







"THE GREATEST SENSE OF HORROR COMES FROM EMOTIONAL TRAUMA AND EMOTIONAL LOSS, AND THE SENSE THAT YOUR LIFE MEANS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING; THAT YOU ARE ABSOLUTELY POWERLESS IN THE FACE OF SOMETHING MUCH GREATER THAN YOURSELF." BROOKE BURGESS

in the Third World, and specifically people in the Middle East – basically relinquish all of their livelihood and all of their resources for fear of God judging them in the sky."

Burgess adds that in *Broken Saints*, "The greatest sense of horror comes from emotional trauma and emotional loss, and the sense that your lifa means absolutely nothing, that you are absolutely powerless in the face of something much greater than yourseif."

With a hugely ambitious narrative and dwindling personal resources, the crew exhausted their funds about halfway through the online series. Burgess and company then approached Telefilm, Bell Canada, and the National Film Board for grants to continue it.

"All of them said: 'We're not sure what this is; the media is not interactive; it's not really a film because you have to read it, so we can't help you,'" he recalls. "I was getting a little desperate and I didn't want to whore out the site with banner ads, although we ware getting five to ten thousand unique visitors a day. I wanted to create a safe mental oasis for people on the site so we finally swallowed our pride and asked our fans for help."

After a public appeal for donations and a series of fundraising concerts over two years, the trio raised another $15,000 to push forward with their unique animated graphic novel. Finally, almost three years later – twelve hours, 24 chapters and 57 parts – the series was complete. After *Broken Saints* won its Sundance Film Festival award in January of 2003, Telefilm Canada approached Burgess with an offer to collect the show on a DVD.

"I didn't want to just repackage the original series," he says. "I wanted to redo everything, in surround sound, throw in new effects, bring together fan films, behind-tha-scenes stuff, shoot some featurettes, do it in different language subtitles – really top-end bells and whistles stuff."

Carol Parnel, the matriarch of new media at Telefilm Canada on the West Coast at the time advised them that this kind of project would cost half a million dollars. Having nothing to lose, the team put together a proposal that ended up being rated one of the best DVD proposals in the country for that year.

Using higher-end products like Adobe After Effects and Combustion, the crew completely reworked the entire series for the DVD. Viewers are no longer required to read the moving comic, since the voice talents of William B. Davis ("Cancer Man" from *The X-Files*), Kirby Morrow (*Dragonball Z*), David Kaye (*Beast Wars*) and others were brought on board to narrate. The double disc contains all the bells and whistles Burgess had hoped for and hit shelves nationwide this past July. And though the reinvented story still moves as slowly as the online version did, Burgess chalks the pace up to a narrative requirement.

"Any good storytelling takes time but once you get to the last third of the story it ramps up exponentially like any good narrative art does, and it gets intense," he says. "There's less sleeping and more maddening, gnashing of teeth, great fear and huge emotional payoff for the characters."

Of course this is just the baginning for *Broken Saints*. Because of his video game background Burgess has been in discussions to create an an epic, mature, adventure storytelling-based gama for adults set for production this month. But more exciting is the director's confirmation of rumblings regarding an eight to ten-hour live-action television miniseries along the lines of *Twin Peaks*.

"The Flash version on the DVD was indulgent and poetic and all those things that I wanted it to be, appealing more to the *Sandman* crowd," he says. "Now I'd lika to take the twelve hours and make it a bit more heavy and symbolic, a little more adventure-driven but still keeping the horror and the mature theme, not watering it down in the slightest."

He adds: "Wa're bandying about names like Cronenberg and Lynch, who both do the type of thing that leaves a lasting impact."

FLASH FREAK SHOW



BY DAVE ALEXANDER

Horror feeds on many forms, and Flash animation is no exception. Since the user-friendly animation tool debuted a decade ago, it has grown as a new computer-based art form combining the aesthetic of comic books with the dynamics of motion pictures. Online communities like newgrounds.com host and catalogue thousands of shorts, series and interactive games created with the multimedia authoring program and, not surprisingly, horror is a strong presence. Free to view, here's a sampling of some of the best genre-themed Flash Animation on the 'net, and a look at the artists who found a new forum for fear.

XOMBIE

by James Farr
(www.xombified.com)

A computer tech by day, animator in his spare time, and zombie fan 24/7, Tulsa, Oklahoma's James Farr is also one of the most successful Flash freaks out there. His ongoing undead saga *Xombie* was picked up earlier this year by Canadian company Wetsand Animation, and is currently being turned into a 70-minute animated movie, slated for release in 2006.

"I started *Xombie* originally because it was something I'd never seen before, and a story that had never been told," he explains. "It's a fresh angle on the zombie genre, which I felt was getting pretty boring back in 2000, when I started."

The plot follows a young girl named Zoe, who wakes up in a shadowy undead-infested wasteland with amnesia. An intelligent, muscle-bound, shovel-wielding zombie named Dirge protects her against a legion of flesh-eaters, vicious reanimated animals and various other monsters, as they search for more survivors and try to unlock both of their pasts.

"I'd call it a hybrid somewhere between an anime and a classic Tim Burton film – dark, moody, lots of dry humour," says Farr of the series' style. "Zombies, monsters, mummies and dinosaurs beating the crap out of each other: basically it's my dream come true."

The six segments posted thus far on the *Xombie* website average around five minutes in length, and took Farr about five months to complete in his off-hours. As far as crafting a rich, dark atmosphere on a budget, Farr believes the format is unbeatable.

"It's a pretty economical way to put your ideas in motion, and get them out in front of people," he says. "With Flash, the result is based more on your skills and effort than the amount of money you have to burn."

DR. SHROUD

by Rob Feldman
(www.drshroud.com)

Flash animation may be a product of the Digital Age, but Rob Feldman uses it to create an original series grounded in the monster movie serials of yesteryear. A few years ago the Milford, New Jersey man created *Dr. Shroud*, an online serial about a "reformed" vampire searching for his daughter. Disguised as a plastic surgeon, the throwback hero battles an assortment of supernatural baddies using an array of campy inventions, including a "vamp-o-meter."

"In terms of horror, I love the Hammer films, Bava, *anything* with Vincent Price, George Romero and any B-movie, preferably with vampires," says Feldman, adding legendary comic book illustrators like Jack Kirby and John Byrne, as well as younger artists like *Hellboy* creator Mike Mignola, to his list of artistic influences.

Each two to three minute episode ends with a cliffhanger, and viewers choose the outcome by voting online. He says the series isn't simply reviving an old style in a new form, though.

"While I am strongly influenced by cheesy horror movies, I do try to draw from research of actual events and horror literature for each plot," he reveals. "That combination reveals some degree of substance beneath the surface of the B-movie atmosphere."

Feldman recently released a compilation of the stories on DVD, which is for sale on the *Dr. Shroud* homepage.



Take a background in animation, add rabid Romero love, and you get...

CITY OF ROTT

Like countless other budding horror fans, Frank Sudol watched a muddy video copy of a Romero film back in the '80s and caught the zombie bug. Years later, he's decided to channel his obsession with the undead into a 50-minute Flash-animated film called *City of Rott*.

"Since I first saw it on VHS back in 1986, *Day of the Dead* remains my ultimate inspiration for creating a kick-ass zombie film," he says. "As a kid, I didn't care much about plot – I just wanted to see more zombies, blood and guts. Now, I appreciate the story Romero was telling. And *Dawn* has the scope and exploration I crave in a zombie flick. *City of Rott* captures a hint of both, in a new way."



Sudol decided to pursue his dream of making an animated zombie movie after he returned home to Philadelphia (where Romero's zombie movies are set, he's quick to point out), after working as an animator on the *South Park* movie. So far he's put over 800 hours into the project, and has even created the score.

City of Rott, which Sudol plans to premiere this September (he also hopes to secure DVD distribution), takes the familiar "zombie hordes in the streets" scenario and places Fred, a walker-wielding senior in the throes of senility, at the centre of it all. As the trailer demonstrates (blackarro.com), Sudol's approach is havoc over subtlety.

"There's a ton of zombies, so many that the city streets disappear from sight on occasion," he boasts. "What was the goal? Besides bringing a new twist to the zombie story, *City of Rott* was made to fill the hunger for zombie mayhem: zombies feasting on guts, mass zombie hordes walking the streets, attacking the living and getting their brains blown out or smashed in. Sick, huh?"

Dave Alexander

SALAD FINGERS

by David Firth
(www.fat-pie.com)



Take a sickly green creature with three long tendrils for hands, give him quaint British mannerisms then add liberal amounts of perverse obsession, neurotic hysteria and deeply disturbing atmosphere, and you've got *Salad Fingers*, the endearingly repulsive Flash monstrosity from David Firth.

"Salad Fingers is a friendly man like anyone else," understates the Hull, England-based artist. "He's just a bit lonely. Each episode describes how he'd handle a certain situation and explores more of his day-to-day habits and rituals."

Set to a droning score (courtesy of songs from electronic groups like Boards Of Canada), those rituals include tea parties, the "pleasures" of stinging nettles, lusting for rusty metal and seeking gratification through self-mutilation. Influenced by *South Park* as much as Tim Burton, the five episodes – each a few minutes long – have earned *SF* a cult following. Fans have posted a variety of themed art to Firth's site, created Flash spoofs, and one band even recorded a tribute song, proving the drawing power of horror in new mediums.

Firth admits: "I didn't used to like Flash but no other format is as web-friendly. Anyone with an internet browser can watch Flash movies without having to save them to disk and open them with a media player. Also, sites like Newgrounds offer an instant audience."

KOLLAPS

by Kol Belov
(www.kollaps.ru)

"All of my life I've observed the apocalypse – macabre nightmares on the screen," says Moscow artist Kol Belov, describing how the seed of his *Kollaps* Flash projects germinated in the media, in movies and on television. Since 2001 he's created dozens of Flash shorts, as well as a few games, that combine industrial Orwellian hellscapes, politically-charged images inspired by Russian Futurism, surreal gore, and unsettling soundtracks (utilizing music by groups like Skinny Puppy and The Electric Hellfire Club) for a dead serious animation experience.



In "Self-Destructing Organisms, Vol. 6", for example, a dead soldier is placed on a factory conveyor belt. His mask is removed, then a worker from The Department of Recycling gouges out his eye and uses the blood to paint a smile on his face, just before sending him into a machine that pulps his corpse. Meanwhile, a creature resembling a Cenobite injects blood from a poisoned rat into its own face.

"I create cartoons because I feel the necessity for it," says Belov. "My art is influenced by my own dreams and nightmares, and they give birth to the horrific characters of my cartoons. In my work I use Flash, as in my opinion it is the most accessible tool for creating short animated movies."


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Most of the world knows DR. JACK KEVORKIAN as "Dr. Death" – the physician who forced assisted suicide into the mainstream – but what they don't know is that he's also a respected painter with an oeuvre befitting his nickname. *Rue Morgue* examines the surreal horror canvases of the man whose art echoes the Reaper.



Death Strokes

BY PAUL CARLUCCI

A stark, white skull sits amid a heap of bones jutting out of red soil. An indigo flower grows out of one of the eye sockets and illuminates the steely blue gloom around it, lending a vigorous beauty to an otherwise macabre display. This is *Very Still Life*, one of several oil-on-canvas paintings by Dr. Jack Kevorkian, a.k.a. Doctor Death.

In his recently published book *GlimmerIDs* (which he wrote while incarcerated), the 77-year-old states that *Very Still Life*'s message is: "capricious, vague and indefinable." Actually, the subject matter is rather telling, and the interpretations it allows are two-fold. To those who favour Kevorkian's infamous campaign to legitimize physician-assisted suicide, the painting symbolizes his contributions to the families of the barely living: the doctor ambles out of his old VW van with a few canisters of carbon monoxide, and, by helping the terminally ill escape protracted agony and indecorous death, he allows a fresh stalk of healthy life and guilt-free beauty to take hold. For those opposed to his agenda, the painting is a smug taunt, a symbol of the aging pathologist's newfound glory, a rebirth rooted in the remains of his victims.

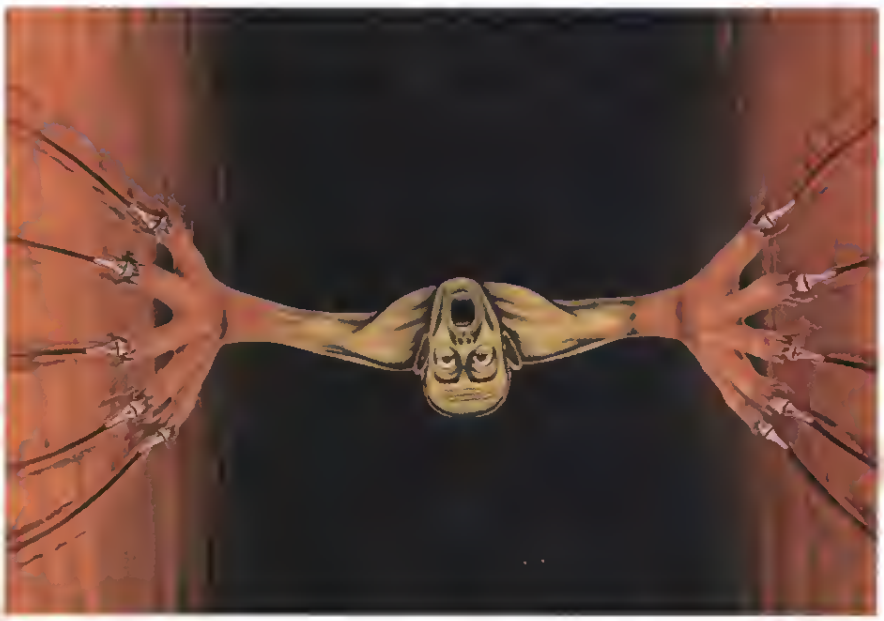
"Basically, his personality is 'fuck you' to everybody who doesn't agree with him, and that is reflected in his artwork," explains Michael Betzold, author of *Appointment With Doctor Death*, a detailed biography about Kevorkian. "He used it as a polemic. He used it to shock people, and it's a part of his personality to be 'me-against-the-world.'"

In 1990, at the age of 62, Jack Kevorkian vaulted into the public eye after helping an Alzheimers victim lethally poison herself in Detroit. With that, the bespectacled Armenian launched an eight-year campaign to drag assisted suicide out of the medicine cabinet and into the sickbed, an endeavour that polarized a nation that knows division like Poe knew drink.

Lawmakers and the religious right finally caught up to Kevorkian after 16-million CBS viewers watched him put down a Lou Gehrig's sufferer on *60 Minutes* in 1998. The man who claims to have assisted some 130 people in suicide was sentenced to 10-25 years for second-degree murder.

Certainly, that's his most acknowledged legacy. But Kevorkian has also produced an array of work, much of it artistic, and all of it coming from the unique perspective of someone intimate with death. In the years leading up to his infamy, Kevorkian was by turns a musician (releasing a jazz CD in 1997 called *A Very Still Life*), an author (in addition to *GlimmerIDs* and several books on assisted suicide, he self-published a collection of diet-themed limericks), photographer (he documented the eyes of dying patients in an effort to determine when they were beyond resuscitation) and filmmaker (in the '60s he made a seldom talked about 90-minute adaptation of George





***Death Imitates Art**: (Opposite page) Very Still Life, (top) The Gourmet (War), and (bottom) Nearer My God to Thee.*



Christmas

"What is war? It is a grotesque farrago of violent death and destruction, crosses, weeping mothers, patriotism and high paying jobs."

Dr. Jack Kevorkian

Frederic Handel's *Messiah*). Productive as he was in various mediums, his talents are at their most striking when channeled through a paintbrush.

Whether tenebrous, like *Nearer My God to Thee*, or puckish, like *For He Is Raised*, Kevorkian's canvasses reveal much about his psyche: a bustling city core splattered with wounded pedestrians and cobbled with gallows humour.

"He felt very strongly about his artwork," says Betzold. "He was an artist, and he was creating these works of art to express his views about medicine and the medical establishment, and about politics and religion."

The works came out of the turbulent '60s, when Kevorkian was a very busy man. Aside from experimenting with and promoting cadaver-to-person blood transfusions, he was also enrolled in a Pontiac, Michigan oil painting class. According to *Appointment With Doctor Death*, Kevorkian dismissed his classmates as a gaggle of uninspired automatons who sickened him with their trite renderings. Repelled and empowered, Doctor Death executed seventeen canvasses drawing in equal parts from his fascination with death and his detailed knowledge of anatomy and sickness. His first works focused heavily on illness.

"[They] represent a somewhat whimsical but natural choice of topics for a physician, namely, depicting symptoms," Kevorkian writes in *GlimmerlQs*. "The surprising interest they evoked motivated me to expand into social commentary."

To Kevorkian's surprise, his classmates were impressed, and some of his pieces were shown around galleries in Michigan during the '60s and '70s (regrettably, all of his original work was later lost in storage).

Decades later, in the midst of his campaign for assisted suicide, while besieged by lawmen and the media, the unemployed Kevorkian picked up his brushes again, hoping to raise money for legal fees and a suicide-friendly medical facility. His new works comprised a series of wonderfully crisp, shamelessly acerbic diatribes against race, religion, life and war.

"His thematic styles are social commentary, religious commentary and political commentary," says Anne Kuffler, head of the Ariana Gallery in Royal Oak, Michigan, where six reproductions of the doctor's work can be obtained. "They are critiques on all three systems."

How he feels about it today is hard to say. After receiving a copy of *Rue Morgue*, Ruth Holmes, a member of Kevorkian's legal team, declined a request for an interview with the doctor.

"Now that we have a copy of the magazine," she writes in an e-mail, "I do not believe his lawyer will allow [Kevorkian] and his work to be part of this format. We spend a lot of effort working with Kevorkian on constitutional and medical issues, so this type of magazine is not helpful for him. It may actually have a negative impact on his potential release from prison because it rein-





Art After Death: *(above left) Genocide, and (above right) Brotherhood.*

forces a stereotype that is not true."

Ironically, *GlimmerIQs* contains a full-colour section of Kevorkian's paintings, complete with descriptions of their controversial themes.

Before the Armenian Heritage Museum in Watertown, Massachusetts got a hold of the new originals, the Ariana Gallery set up a couple of exhibits in support of physician-assisted suicide. The first was held in October 1994, the second in March 1997, one year before Kevorkian was incarcerated.

"Most people who came were amazed at his ability to express the criticism he wanted to say considering he's not well versed in painting techniques," Kuffler says. "Most were in favour of what he was doing, so they were expressing their support of assisted suicide. Others were there just to see what he had to say and to see if his paintings were all macabre. And then we had the rare bird who said it was disgusting and uninteresting and that the man was crazy and needed to be put in an asylum. But that was a rare, rare comment."

According to Kuffler, each exhibit produced about 2000 people for the openings and another 150 people a day over the course of a month.

"Doctor Kevorkian and I had many conversations about each piece," she says. "He did them with little or no input from the art world. With some of them, the message is easier to decipher, but some are more difficult, like *Brotherhood* or *Gourmet*. Once you begin to think about war, you begin to understand what he's trying to say."

Brotherhood depicts the torso of a man suited in a surreal blazer of transmogrified, racially divergent faces, a green-hued, white-fanged visage of piping evil glowing from beneath those multinational lapels. According to a statement Kevorkian gave to the PBS show *Frontline*, the painting represents humanity's central devotion to an ideology of hellish mayhem, an allegiance to violence, destruction and bedlam exemplified throughout the world, "in Bosnia, Somalia, Ireland, India, the Middle East, Cuba, Tibet, South Africa and Waco."

Gourmet is by far his most gruesome work. It depicts a decapitated man dining on his own head. Blood flows downward from his neck, and his upper vertebrae are in plain view. A red-skinned Roman holds his utensil-bearing hands upright. The table is cluttered with a side bowl of crucifixes, a soldier's helmet heaping with bullets and a couple missile-shaped salt-and-pepper shakers.

"What is war?" Kevorkian writes in *GlimmerIQs*. "It is a grotesque farrago of violent death and destruction, crosses, weeping mothers, patriotism and high paying jobs."

Similar in theme and tone is *1915 Genocide 1945*. Two hands extend from either end of the frame and clutch at a length of blonde hair sprouting from a decapitated head. The hand on the left has a swastika on the shirt cuff. On the right, a star and crescent. It's Turkish iconography – the Turks slaughtered millions of Armenians in a 1915 genocide the world has been slow to acknowledge. The frame on the original was even painted with human blood to underscore the grizzly violence of the theme.

"To fail to take but token interest in the whole ugly affair, to avoid making it an almost hereditary memory, would be abdicating the decent human responsibility and thereby assuring recurrence," Kevorkian writes.

The Ariana Gallery sells an average of one Kevorkian print a month. The most popular – a 16 x 21" piece priced at $250 – is called *Nearer My God to Thee*, a stark, disturbing portrayal of a screeching figure plunging into a dark and seemingly bottomless pit. Desperate fingers claw violently at terra cotta walls, leaving deep grooves that follow the sad being into the abyss of death.

The Ariana Gallery is located at 119 S. Main, Royal Oak, MI 48067, 248-546-8810. Kevorkian prints range from $175-$250.



Film, Video, Dvd & Reissues

CINEMACABRE



***Land of the Dead**: A weirdly hopeful zombie picture.*

ROMERO'S RIGHTEOUS RETURN

LAND OF THE DEAD

Starring Simon Baker, Asia Argento
and Dennis Hopper
Written and directed by George A. Romero
Universal Pictures

We've waited two decades for Uncle George's follow-up to *Day of the Dead*, in the interim witnessing slavish imitations, affectionate homage and clumsy rip-offs. Now, at long last, it's back to the genuine article, with guts and brains behind the camera as well as in front of it. And it was worth the wait.

Romero explodes the siege scenarios of the first three *Dead* films into another of his beloved alternative cultures (in that regard, *Land* is spiritual cousin to *Knightriders*), in this case a massive gated community where the surviving humans – now very much in the minority – are safe from the walking dead threat but remain prey to each other (again, it's the humans who are the real danger). At the top of the food chain is Mr. Kaufman (Hopper, whose scenery chewing sadly doesn't quite ascend to Joe Pilato's in *Day*), lording over the huddled masses from his penthouse suite, using the zombie threat beyond their borders to keep the rabble in line. The blue-collar hero is supply reconnaissance leader Riley (Baker· *The Ring 2*) and his ragtag cohorts (including Asia Argento as a prostitute) – an expectedly diverse Romero group charged with recovering a military vehicle (called Dead Reckoning) of Riley's design. Like its predecessors, this is a political and social satire as much as it is a horror movie, as the heroes use aerial pyrotechnics to pacify and distract the zombie hordes in their own version of "shock and awe."

The R-rating and studio financing make this the tamest of the *Dead* films (at least until the inevitable unrated DVD release), but there's no shortage of the red stuff, and entrail-eating, limb-lopping, skull-splattering gags arrive at a machine-gun rate. This is certainly Romero's fastest paced film and, in that respect, bears a superficial resemblance to the *Dawn* remake, but even after almost 40 years of this, Romero still leads the pack. His eye still shines brightest when the movie stops to take a breather (the image of the zombie horde slowly breaking the surface of a fog-shrouded river is an instant classic), but make no mistake, you will get wet on this ride.

The big budget also means a name cast (including John Leguizamo as tightly-wound zombie killer Cholo) and a sense of scale only hinted at in the earlier films. Even the zombies have evolved with time. Not only are there more of them, but, taking a cue from *Day*'s Bub, they've started to reclaim human characteristics – even as the human characters start to lose theirs – in particular Big Daddy (Eugene Clark), who leads his shambling brethren to wreak vengeance on the human stronghold.

What isn't here is *Day*'s galloping misanthropy. This is a weirdly hopeful zombie picture, in which humans seek not destruction of the zombies, but solace from them, sowing the seeds of understanding in the process. Romero's refrain – we're them, and they're us – is restated here in slightly subtler terms. It's not surprising that his sympathy ultimately lies with the dead. And after all they've given him, can we blame him for loving them back?

Joseph O'Brien

THE DARKEST KNIGHT

BATMAN BEGINS

Starring Christian Bale, Liam Neeson
and Michael Caine
Directed by Chris Nolan
Written By Chris Nolan and David S. Goyer
Warner Bros.

With *Batman Begins*, co-writer/director Christopher (*Memento*) Nolan has delivered what we so desperately wanted, but feared we wouldn't get: a picture that's jet-black, violent, mean, sleazy and often downright muthafuckin' scary. This ain't your daddy's grey-gutted Adam West caped crusader, your big bro's clunky-suited Burton/Keaton vigilante, or – thank Gotham – your cheesy

action figure Schumacher/Kilmer/Clooney Dork Knight. This is Batman reinvented as a bloody samurai shock opera.

Christian Bale packs on the muscle to play billionaire heir Bruce Wayne as a paranoid, shell-shocked, angry, guilt-ridden kid with a death wish. Feeling responsible for the murder of his parents (and harbouring a healthy fear of bats), Wayne is so aghast with the corruption, violence and urban misery (this Gotham is a high-tech cesspool), that he disappears, escaping to Asia to find himself. He's rescued by the mysterious warrior Durkan (a commanding Neeson), who takes him to a coven of ninjas. Wayne learns to channel his anger, forge his fears, sublimate his guilt, and kick the shit out of anyone or anything that opposes him. When the true agenda of the coven is revealed, Wayne hits the low road back to the festering Gotham City, redecorates the basement of his mansion and becomes the titular half-mad winged crime fighter.

Everything about *Batman Begins* clicks: the jaw-dropping art direction, moody cinematography, frenetic and deeply disturbing visuals (including some horrific hallucinations), eerily majestic score by Hans Zimmer and a string of stunning A-list performances. Michael Caine plays Alfred as loving father and protector of the Wayne legacy, Gary Oldman channels Ned Flanders as do-gooder Detective (later Commissioner) Gordon, Morgan Freeman shines as a "Q"-type weapons designer, and Cillian Murphy chills the blood as the psychiatrist/psychopath The Scarecrow. At the center of it all is Bale, who gets so carried away by the costume, he hisses dialogue like some blood-starved vampire. It's intense stuff, with a shadowy psychosis only hinted at in the Tim Burton films.

There are a few holes in Nolan and David Goyer's screenplay, but they're gleefully glossed over by a film that combines the straight-faced feral apocalyptic urgency of the first two *Blade* films (also penned by Goyer) and the relentlessly gloomy, nihilistic tone of *Taxi Driver*. Throw in a bit of romance and a dose of gallows humour and you've got the best Batman movie to date – a summer comic book film with a horror heart.

Chris Alexander



Batman Begins *Christian Bale as the darkest Dark Knight to date*

LOOKING INTO THE ABYSS

H

Starring Junh-ah Yum, Jin-hee Ji and Ji-ru Sung
Written and directed by John-hyuk Lee
Tartan Films



"Have you ever experienced an echoing abyss?" asks Shin Hyen, the cherub-faced serial killer from the new Korean psychodrama *H*. Detective Kang (Ji), questioning the imprisoned Hyen about a recent string of copycat murders, grimaces into the camera, dumbfounded and angry. By this point in the film, the viewer feels the good detective's pain.

After committing a string of murders that, à la *Se7en*, gruesomely illustrate the consequences of immoral behaviour, serial killer Hyen surrenders to police. He's sentenced to death, but just under a year later, with Hyen still behind bars, the killings resume. Detectives Kang and Kim, who investigated the original murders, must figure out how Hyen is killing from his cell and why (like most movie psychos, Hyen has mother issues).

But like too many contemporary horror/suspense films, the plot is buried beneath a mishmash of stylish but arbitrary camera shots, rock video editing, and scenes barely connected to the ones that preceded them. Director John-hyuk Lee seems to know he's losing the thread of his story because he continually inserts expository scenes in which an authority figure – psychologist, coroner, detective – not-so-subtly explains to another character just what the hell is going on.

The "surprise" ending, when it finally comes, is neither surprising nor believable, though it sure looks good. The same can said for much of the film. In spite of Hyen's pseudo-Nietzchean musings on the nature of the abyss, his interrogation scenes are creepy and evocative, particularly one in which he explains the meanings of a series of victim photos spread out before him like a pack of tarot cards. Some of the murder scenes are also first-rate, especially a throat-slicing in a lesbian nightclub.

Obviously some explanation of the killings was necessary (*H* is at heart a traditional detective story), but John-hyuk Lee should have had the courage to let his disconnected, haunting visuals and the deadpan performances tell more of the Mama-Don't-Let-Your-Babies-Grow-Up-To-Be-Serial-Killers story. Either that or he should have kept his plot from falling into that echoing abyss.

James Grainger





They Came Back *A pseudo zombie film that eschews gore for dramatic chills*

UNDEAD BUT DIFFERENT

THEY CAME BACK

Starring Geraldine Pailhas, Jonathan Zaccai and Frédéric Pierrot
Written and directed by Robin Campillo and Brigitte Tijou
Fox Lorber

When is a zombie movie not a zombie movie? When it's a French zombie movie, of course. *They Came Back* (a.k.a. *Les Revenants*), the first feature from France's Robin Campillo, takes a radically different approach to the undead film with an eerie gore-free drama that asks, what would happen if the recently dead suddenly returned to a world that had already said goodbye?

The film opens with a stream of (mostly elderly) people pouring out of a graveyard. They're not flesh-starved monsters, but healthy – although dazed – people in normal clothes. For some unexplained reason 70 million of the deceased have returned, and everyone else must figure out how to deal with it. In the French town where the story unfolds, an emergency shelter is set up, counselling is offered for those dealing with the shock of lost relatives rejoining the family, and special meetings are held to determine what rights they're entitled to, how the economy will handle a massive influx of retirees, and if the younger returnees are entitled to their old jobs (it turns out they are).

But more importantly, what are the emotional consequences? The film follows several recently rekindled relationships: a man whose wife passed away from old age, a couple whose child appears to be the same as he was when he died four years earlier, and a woman burdened by the guilt of her returned lover's tragic accident.

There's some hefty human drama and great performances all around, but then Campillo takes his premise into very unsettling territory. It's discovered that the returned are distant, emotionless, lack regular eating and sleeping habits, sneak away at night, and are actually five degrees colder than the average human. They aren't aggressive, but they're up to something, which leads to subtle psychological creep-outs more effective than average ghoul flick fright tactics.

An icy chill slowly creeps into *They Came Back*, which sadly isn't played for horror in the long run, but nevertheless the film resonates long after it's over because it asks questions that genuine genre films haven't considered. Like the revenants, those French are always up to something.

Dave Alexander

THE GOOD SENSE OF NONSENSE

SKINNED DEEP

Starring Eric Bennett, Karoline Brandt and Warwick Davis
Written and directed by Gabe Bartalos
Bedford Entertainment

Uber-cheapie *Skinned Deep* starts out channeling hillbilly horror via *The Hills Have Eyes*, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *Mother's Day*, with only marginal success for the first hour. Family has car trouble out in the sticks, takes refuge at a gas station run by a predictably unpredictable clan of colourful killer hicks, zany antics ensue, etc.



Imagine *House of 1000 Corpses* remade as a second-string Troma movie and you're getting lukewarm. It's fairly impressive viewed from a design standpoint, but the acting is sub-dinner theatre, the script abysmal, the sound mix worse, and by the way, ain't that the most ass-clenchingly awful title since... I dunno, probably something from the '80s?

But then a strange and wondrous thing happens: during the last 30 minutes, *Skinned Deep* morphs into a watchable film, precisely because it stops trying to make sense.

To explain exactly how this happens would be fraught with spoiler potential – let's just say that if you dig delirious, anarchic and highly inventive horror that knows the crucial difference between humour and comedy, writer/director Bartalos is now officially One To Watch.

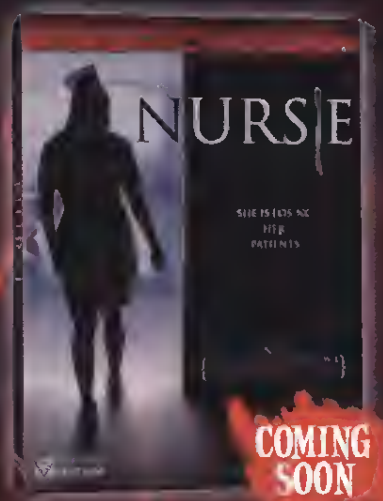
John W. Bowen

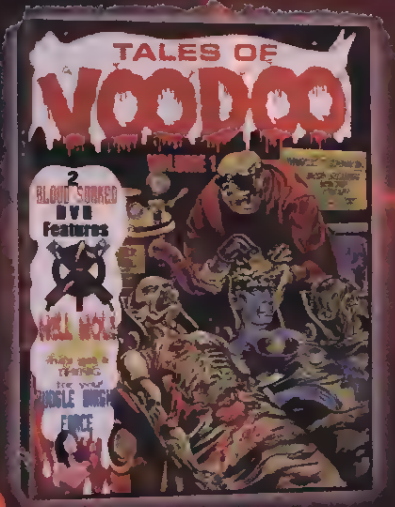




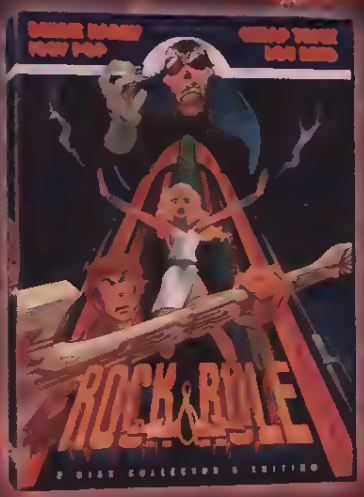
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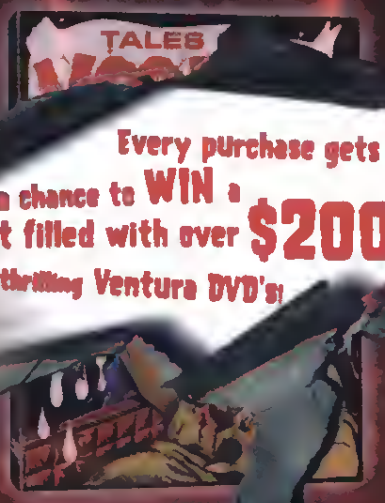












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CRAPTOZOOLOGY

CHUPACABRA TERROR

Starring John Rhys-Davies, Giancarlo Esposito and Dylan Neal
Directed by John Shepphird
Written by Steve Jankowsi and John Shepphird
Regent Entertainment



As you may or may not be aware, chupacabra translates literally to "goat-sucker." And true to its title, *Chupacabra Terror* does, indeed, suck goats. As a bonus, it also eats monkey ass and bites donkey dick. If it likes, it can lick the sweat off this reviewer's gonads.

El goatsucker is captured by cryptozoologist Dr. Peña (Esposito, clearly pining for the days of Peter Benchley's *Creature*), who smuggles it onto a cruise ship captained by John Rhys-Davies (looking like a bag Sean Connery used to be in). It escapes and – oh fuck it. Why bother? Everything you expect to happen pretty much happens, only lamer.

Despite predictable plotting and appallingly apathetic execution, *Chupacabra Terror* raised at least one compelling question: "Why do my editors hate me so damn much?" The real driving question, though, is "What the fuck is John Rhys-Davies doing in this movie?" Even in a career that oscillates wildly between modern classics and utter shit, with little middle ground in between, this is a new low. He knows it, too. You can see it in his eyes – like any second he's going to snap and start throttling the cast of dinner theatre washouts surrounding him, howling "I was in *Lord of the Rings* you bottom-feeding thespian assholes!" like some raging Welsh sasquatch tripping on bad berries.

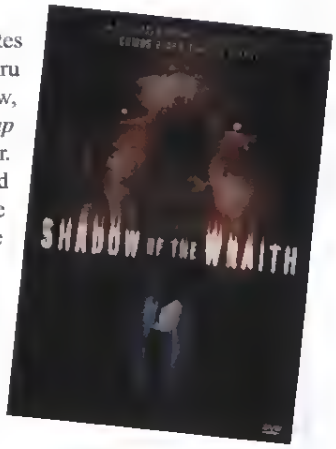
The commentary track by the writer and director is so hair-pullingly tedious you wonder why they bothered in the first place, though Shepphird does offer a keen insight into his creative process as he discusses the "juxtapization" of images during one sequence. Schmuck. Sadly not even worth it for the scene in which the heroine defends herself using fucking tae-bo, which is one step removed from the deadly art of yoga-fu. Chew on that.

Joseph O'Brien

EVIL DEAD CRAP

SHADOW OF THE WRAITH

Starring Yuichi Matsuo, Koji Matsuo and Hitomi Miwa
Directed by Toshiharu Ikeda
Written by Masaya Ozaki and Setsu Yamagachi
Adness/Ventura



When *Rue Morgue* writes Japanese director Toshiharu Ikeda's obituary years from now, it will be 1988's *Evil Dead Trap* that we'll remember him for. That film's Argento-inspired mayhem carved a bloody niche for itself in the hearts of genre fans and opened up the West to horror from the East. By then, 2001's *Shadow of the Wraith* will be just another entry on his selected filmography, alongside *Female Convict Scorpion*, *Death Threat* and *Sex Hunter*.

The tedious *Wraith* fuses the Japanese ghost story with the worst elements of American teen horror films, including sappy love stories, extended concert scenes and timid gore. Its two parts are connected by cute but untalented teen brothers Koji and Yuichi Matsuo, a.k.a. Doggy Bag, a real-life pop duo. They star as – surprise! – cute teen brothers Ryoji and Kazuhiro, who play in an awful pop band. (Imagine Jessica and Ashlee Simpson co-starring on a special episode of *The O.C.* as directed by Wes Craven and you'll get the idea.)

Part one finds popular high school student Ryoji stalked by the tremendously cute but creepy Asaji, whose spirit can separate from her body. It's a nifty little trick that psycho bitch Asaji uses to murder Ryoji's girlfriends. Ryoji finally twigs to the improbable scenario and confronts Asaji, whose empty smile and implacable rage recall *Audition*'s needle-loving Asami. It's a minor spoiler to say that Ryoji doesn't make it to part two.

Ah, yes, part two. Naoko's family moves into room 505 in a haunted building where all apartments with a "5" in them have hosted some mysterious violence. Kazuhiro goes to Naoko's high school and befriends her. Bit by bit, they figure out that something bad happened in her apartment, which might explain the little ghost girl in her closet. The cheap, *Ghostbusters*-style ending, which sees Naoko's apartment turned into an interdimensional vortex, can't come soon enough.

Maybe Ikeda was saddled with talentless pop stars and a script rife with corn but, damn, this is awful, from the inappropriate score to the sitcom-quality sets. *Shadow of the Wraith*, rest in peace.

Sean Plummer



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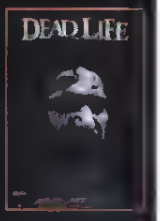
ALLIANCE ATLANTIS



OVERLOOKED, FORGOTTEN AND DISMISSED

THIS ISSUE: ZOMBIES ON A BUDGET!

DEAD AND SMURFIN' IT



DEAD LIFE

Brain Damage Films

It gets the old reagent pumping through the veins again knowing William V. Schotten made a zombie movie on Super-8 instead of the easy video standby. In *Dead Life*, Maxx and friends are trapped in a small town as a viral outbreak revives the dead. The murky washed-out Super-8 look of the film lends credence to their plight, though it sometimes renders the zombies bluer than Papa Smurf. Though it suffers from an overbearing grindcore soundtrack, the storyline is solid (including a painfully hilarious zombie blow job scene) and the "no one gets out of here alive" ending is a definite plus.

Body Count: 18

Chomped Cocks: 1

NITE OF DA SPRINTIN' DED



ZOMBIEZ

Lions Gate

Josephine shows up to work to find zombies munching on her co-workers, but that's only the beginning of her troubles as she narrowly escapes a zombie cult that turns its victims into meat pies. Sure sounds like a great premise, but it fails completely when combined with a nauseating soundtrack and zombies that chase people with prop butcher knives and sickles. Most of the absurd non-story has Josephine fleeing one half-baked mundane predicament after another. The complete absence of plot had me jonesing for *Blacula*.

Body Count: 21

Use of the Word "Fuck": 54

THIS ONE'S FOR MY UNDEAD HOMIEZ



HOOD OF THE LIVING DEAD

Image Entertainment

When promising scientist Ricky fails to save his younger brother Jermaine from the mean streets of LA, he resorts to a secret "cell regenerate" formula to bring the drive-by victim back to life. It works, sort of, turning Jermaine into a flesh-eating zombie on a murderous rampage for revenge – filleting innocent bystanders along the way. Like many low-budget "urban" films, you'd think *Hood* would be inundated by a crappy hip-hop soundtrack, but I was pleasantly surprised to find it wasn't. It's an entertaining diversion with some good gore, a nod to Romero, and a blood-gurgling shout-out to my undead homiez!

Body Count: 14

Use of the Word "Fuck": 172 or once every 29.8 seconds

Last Chance Lance

OVERDUE RETIREMENT

THE ZODIAC KILLER

Starring Vladimir Maksic, Ulli Lommel and Todd Jensen

Written and directed by Ulli Lommel

Lions Gate Home Entertainment



Known pretty much as a hack nowadays, German director Ulli Lommel was a core crew member of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's filmmaking team, and back in the day helmed the acclaimed *Tenderness of the Wolves* as well as *The Blank Generation*, featuring Richard Hell, and *Cocaine Cowboys*, featuring Andy Warhol. Then along came 1980 and the subpar supernatural slasher *Boogeyman*, and it's been pretty much downhill from there. All of this just makes it painful to watch *The Zodiac Killer*, a shot-on-video cheapie that's simply pitiful for a guy with Lommel's resumé.

A fictional story fueled by real-life events, it stars Lommel as Simon Vale, the author of a book detailing the crimes of the real zodiac killer. Vale is conveniently asked to update his work at the same time as a disturbed youth starts blowing people away, copycat-style. When the kid gets in touch with Vale, seeking more information on his idol, he quickly figures out he's the copycat killer, but the killer in turn is not so swift in picking up on Vale's dark secret. '70s horror badass David Hess sadly makes a cameo as a psychiatrist, proving the future can be dismal for an aging horror vet.

To be fair, *The Zodiac Killer* would stand as an okay effort by a first-time director. Lommel is a surprisingly sturdy actor, and the story is considerably more interesting than the typical low-budget gory serial killer plot. But for a guy with decades of experience behind the camera, it's inexcusable that scenes are shot in people's living rooms, effects are non-existent, and the film is loaded with stock footage.

Up next for Lommel are a total of five Edgar Allan Poe adaptations, beginning with *The Raven*. At this point, you gotta admire the man's persistence, but not much else.

Aaron Lupton

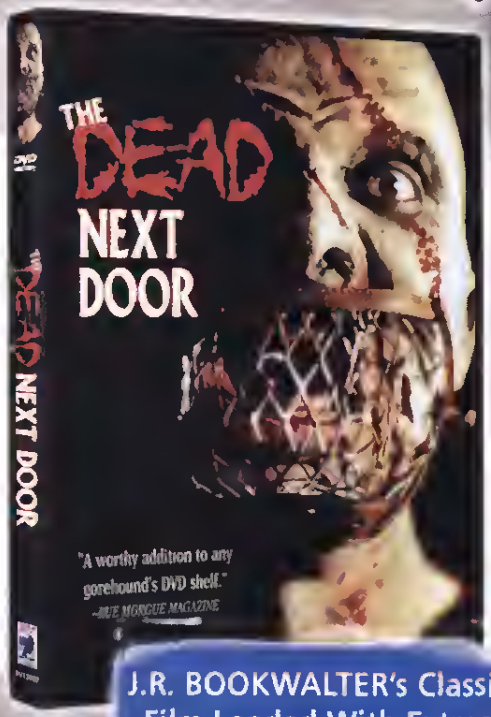


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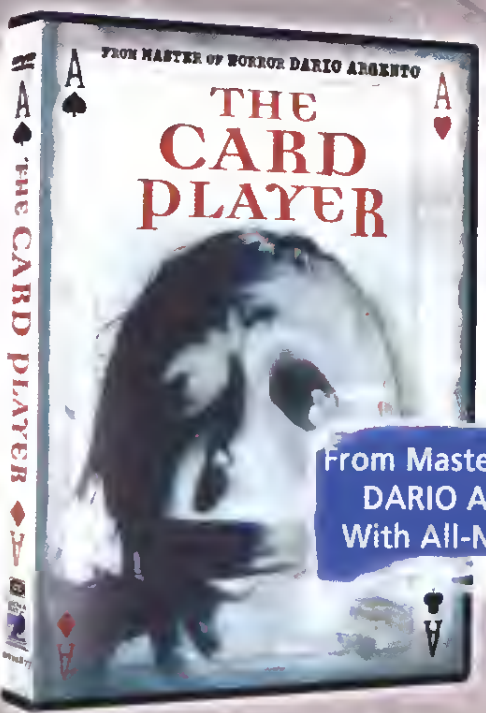
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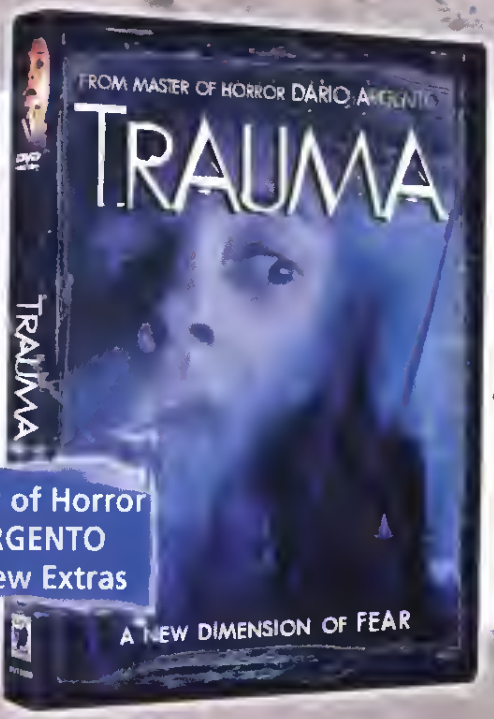


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Check in and check out *Graveyard Alive*, the world's first independent, semi-feminist, Canadian zombie love story that takes its cues as much from *General Hospital* as it does *Dead Alive* and *Plan 9 From Outer Space*.

A Zombie Nurse In Love

by Lilsa Ladouceur

When was the last time you sat around at a party dreaming up cool movie ideas with your drunken friends? Now when's the last time you came up with anything as fun as "zombie nurse in love"? *Graveyard Alive* is the latest in the recent wave of zombie comedies, though it prefigures *Shaun of the Dead* by one year and was made almost entirely by women.

The film began as a bit of lark for director/writer Elza Kephart (a film grad) and her girlfriend Patricia Gomez (a biologist), who each kicked in $1000 to get it rolling back in 2000. But with a premise as irresistible as "*Night of the Living Dead* meets *General Hospital*" it soon grew into a full-fledged feature.

"I didn't set out to comment on a specific film," Kephart tells *Rue Morgue* from her home in Montreal. "I love *Dead Alive* because it's so over-the-top outrageous but, as a rule, I don't really enjoy gore anyway. It's a strange pastiche of zombie films and B-films of the '50s and '60s."

Shot for $25,000 on a borrowed 35mm technoscope camera by DOP John Ashmore, this black-and-white picture is not so much a spoof of *Dead Alive* as it is a modern-day B-movie, complete with ridiculous character names, in-your-face visual gags, the occasional dub slip-up and creative use of a limited special effects budget.

"My primary concern was that we didn't have any money," the director recalls. "We figured we'd do it like old B-movies, if the sets don't quite work and some actors are bad and others good, then people will just accept it and enjoy it anyway. Our effects budget was $70. Our guy would come in with, like, a bag of borrowed hands and say 'pick one!'"



Set in an aging hospital ward, *Graveyard Alive* stars Anne-Day Jones as Pasty Powers, a dumpy nurse who is enamoured with handsome Dr. Dox (Karl Gerhardt), fiancé of future head nurse Goodie Teuschuze (Samantha Slan). When not daydreaming about Dox, Patsy is zoned out watching hospital soap operas and reading hospital romance novels. So when a horny woodcutter with an axe embedded in his head comes in for treatment and gives her the eye, she doesn't notice he's a zombie, nor even after he takes a bite out of her!

Nor do her alleged medical-expert co-workers, too busy getting it on and gossiping to notice the patient is undead. The whole picture can be seen as a comment on the collapsing health care system, where not even a rotting man can get some attention!

"My family makes fun of me for saying it's social commentary, but it is," says Kephart. "Goodie isn't really a good nurse. She just likes being around the doctors. She compares rings during the operations, for example. The hospital system *is* kind of crumbling. I thought it would be funny to do a metaphor with crumbling zombies."

Graveyard Alive definitely feels like a film helmed by women. It's a rare, low-budget zombie flick that can boast feisty lead female characters, who each go through extreme transformations, surrounded by a gaggle of oblivious panting men. Patsy's "zombiefication" becomes a sexual awakening, and her new provocative attitude turns her into the hospital hottie. Except, in a twist borrowed from the vampire tradition, she now craves human flesh to keep her body from deteriorating. The dowdy dame becomes quite the man-eater – literally. In one hilarious scene, she lustily picks a man's bones clean.

"We wanted to make a point that the sexual female, even though she's a monster, is victorious," explains Kephart. "She's better off being a zombie. She's not necessarily happier, but now she's aware of the power she can have. She's probably sadder, but at least she's active."

Graveyard Alive has been picking up interest since it premiered at FanTasia 2003. It was featured at Slamdance in 2004 and also screened at FantasPorto in Portugal this past March. Canadian distributor Reaction Releasing will have it in select Canadian theatres this month, with a DVD release planned for the fall. For a small project, it offers big laughs, thought-provoking themes and enough bloody bits to keep pure horror hounds happy.

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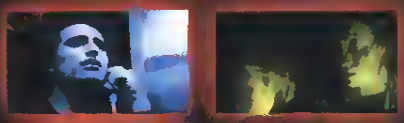
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TWO NEW *WAR OF THE WORLDS* FILMS – ONE MADE WITH AN UNLIMITED BUDGET AND ONE WITH POCKET CHANGE – WERE RELEASED LAST MONTH, PROVING ONCE AGAIN THAT H.G. WELLS' CENTURY-OLD ALIEN INVASION TALE STILL HAS RELEVANCE.

CINEMACABRE PRESENTS

DEATH FROM ABOVE

WAR OF THE WORLDS

Starring Tom Cruise, Justin Chatwin and Dakota Fanning
Directed by Steven Spielberg
Written by H.G. Wells (novel), Josh Friedman and David Koepp
Paramount

This just in: the Martians have landed and we're all going to die. In other news: Steven Spielberg is no longer a pussy. That's right, the director of wishy-washy friendly alien family epics *E.T.* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* has redeemed himself with a fantastically bleak adaptation of H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds*. Not that his previous alien efforts are bad movies, they just didn't have any balls. Not so for *War of the Worlds*.

Like Orson Welles' 1938 radio version and Byron Haskin's 1953 movie adaptation, Spielberg relocates Wells' story to modern, terrorist-fearing America, capitalizing once again on topical cultural anxiety. And it works. Tom Cruise stars as New Jersey dock worker Ray Ferrier, a separated bachelor and irresponsible father who gets his kids (Chatwin and Fanning) on the same weekend Martians invade to exterminate humanity.

As they run for their lives, people are incinerated, cities are laid to waste, young Rachel witnesses a river of floating corpses, and the shredded clothing of vaporized humans drifts through the air – the aftermath of the giant, vampiric war machines pummeling the earth.

Spielberg does a bang-up job paying tribute to Wells' original story as well as Welles' famous radio drama (which also took place along the Eastern seaboard) *and* the drive-in style of Haskin's film. The war machines are decidedly retro; unlike Haskin's flying saucers Spielberg's harbingers of doom are classic Wells, with tripod legs, and roaring with an intermittent menacing sound reminiscent of the growl of the truck in *Duel*, or the shark in *Jaws*.

Like the novel, the movie comes to an abrupt, almost anti-climactic halt as the aliens succumb to the "humblest things that God in His wisdom has put upon this earth," but in his effort to stay true to Wells, it's forgivable. *War of the Worlds* is a visual effects extravaganza, and despite the fact that the aliens themselves are a little too cute for the average horror fan – and Spielberg blew their reveal in the house scene – in the end, a bleak, violant alien invasion and a mercifully short family reunion (with cameos by '53 *WotW* stars Ann Robinson and Gene Barry) make it one of the darkest Spielberg offerings in decades.

Jovanka Vuckovic

WAR OF THE WORLDS

Starring C. Thomas Howell, Rhett Giles and Jake Busey
Directed by David Michael Latt
Written by H.G. Wells (novel), Carlos De Los Rios and David Michael Latt
Asylum Home Entertainment



Riding the mega-budget coattails of Spielberg's *War of the Worlds*, Asylum has cranked out a micro-budget straight-to-DVD version of the H.G. Wells story, timed to invade store shelves as the Hollywood version hit theatres. Naturally it's pulpy – opening with boobs, moving on to modest amounts of poorly-animated alien war machines, and peaking with a good gory face-melting – but it's also competently acted and well scripted in a way that sells the modernization of a bleak classic.

B-movie standby Howell stars as Dr. George Herbert, an astronomer trying to get to Washington D.C. to find his wife and son in the wake of an apocalyptic alien invasion. Along the way he's accompanied by a priest who's losing it (Giles) and confronts a soldier (Busey) who's already lost it. The film is slow in parts, with too much dialogue over action, but director and co-writer David Michael Latt's obsession with desperate, nihilistic discussions about loss of faith adds an unexpected edge that fits the grizzled, beleaguered tone of the adaptation. It's no star-studded, special effects extravaganza, but serious Wells fans should give this one a go, to see how the philosophical undertones of the story can be blown up just as easily as city blocks.

Dave Alexander

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BEHIND THE TOXIC CURTAIN

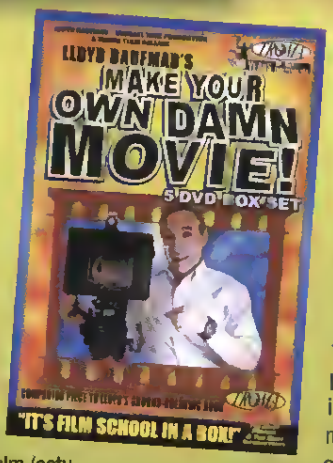


by John W. Bowen

Lloyd Kaufman didn't direct *Citizen Kane*, *The Seventh Seal* or even *Phantasm 2*, but after three decades as head of the world's most fiercely independent – make that pathologically independent – film studio, he's better qualified to impart wisdom to budding indie filmmakers than most big name auteurs. Not surprisingly, *Make Your Own Damn Movie*, a sprawling five-disc companion piece to Uncle Lloyd's book of the same name (*RM#35*), benefits in equal measure from his knowledge of the craft and his still-undiminished passion for it. Even those familiar with his work may be taken aback by the way the undisputed king of weird violence, weirder sex and endless fart jokes draws upon a near-encyclopedic repertoire of cinematic stylists from Buster Keaton to Ingmar Bergman to Howard Hawks and a 100-odd points between.

Probably the single most educational feature in the collection is *Apocalypse Soon: The Making of Citizen Toxie*, a lengthy step-by-step doc detailing the entire production of Troma's 2001 *Toxic Avenger Part IV*, detailing everything from casting sessions and script meetings to pyro effects and directorial tantrums (more frequent than you can imagine). There's also a full-length "workshop deconstruction edition" of *The Battle of Love's Return*, Kaufman's $6,000 1971 film (actually just the film with an optional commentary track). Still, Kaufman's commentary makes it all worthwhile: "[Film critic] Judith Crist compared me to Woody Allen at the time, which was pretty good considering I hadn't fucked any children." As befits any product bearing the Troma logo, the *MYDDM* box is huge, chaotic and sometimes downright disconcerting, although as Kaufman explains in the liner notes, "It is not a linear process, and that's how we want you to approach this DVD boxed set."





Of course, not all the pro advice here comes from Kaufman himself. He pillages his address book, roping in '70s mainstays John Avildsen and John Badham, both of whom he had worked for back in the day on *Rocky* and *Saturday Night Fever*, respectively. Other highlights include an interview with Trey Parker and Matt Stone on the troubled set of *Team America*, Eli Roth dishing on *Cabin Fever*'s excruciating birth pains, and affable Stuart Gordon reminiscing about *Re-Animator*. Plus, there's interview footage I actually watched Kaufman shoot with Gentleman George Romero during a smoke break at last year's Rue Morgue Festival of Fear (keep your eyes peeled for Rod Gudino in the background).

In the most fascinating interview by far, decidedly spry 98-year-old Vincent Sherman (*All Through the Night*, *The Hard Way*) details the horrors of being blacklisted in the '50s. But that ain't the half of it, as there are simply too many other celebrity interviews and advice segments to list here. The quality of these features fluctuates wildly, but it's all in the name of stuffing each disc right up to the hooters with valuable indie film edutainment.

Those who think Kaufman's strident loathing of the studio system is simple indie snob posturing should check out the footage he shot several years back at Austin's annual South by Southwest Film Festival, at which he was supposed to be "honoured" with a Troma retrospective. "God clearly does not exist," he mutters, scarcely managing to reign in the legendary Kaufman temper upon learning he can't even get a seat while former MPAA president/scumbag Jack Valenti is feted and fawned over by industry weasels. "Not since Hitler was immortalized in *Triumph of the Will* has there been something as obscene as this," he sneers.

Independent film simply doesn't have a more passionate living advocate than Lloyd Kaufman, and *MYDDM*'s suggested retail price of $49.95 USD – half the price of Charles Band's similar yet much less informative and entertaining *Cinemaker* set – speaks volumes about Kaufman's commitment to the next generation. Never have so many owed so much to one indie auteur.

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REISSUES



Touch of Death: Effectively revolting and brutally humorous.

FULCI'S GRUE TUBE

TOUCH OF DEATH (1988)

Starring Brett Halsey, Pier Luigi Conti and Sacha Darwin
Written and directed by Lucio Fulci
Shriek Show

By the time the '80s wound down, aging gutslinger Lucio Fulci (*Zombie*, *The Beyond*) had fallen out of favour with both the Italian and international film industry, and was forced to toil in television. Now, if this were US television we'd be hanging our heads in shame (see Stuart Gordon's awful movie-of-the-week, *Daughter of Darkness*) but this was Italian television where lurid sex and depravity is apparently A-Otay. Although old man Fulci shot some real duds for the boob tube (see *Sweet House of Horrors* if you dare), he also experimented with some far-out and ultra-violent stuff that occasionally flat-out rocked. Along with the gory and creepy *House of Clocks*, *Touch of Death* (a.k.a. *When Alice Broke the Mirror*) is not only one of his best TV movies, it may be his weirdest.



It follows the unsavoury antics of small-time loser Lester Parson (Fulci veteran Brett Halsey), a gambler who has turned to murder to feed his bank-breaking habit. The film opens with Parson dining on a bloody steak while watching what appears to be some icky homemade porn. Turns out our boy Lester seduces butt ugly rich broads, films their sexcapades, raids their bank accounts, murders them, then eats their flesh – feeding the leftovers to his kitty and the pigs he keeps in his guest house.

While not on par with any of the maestro's signature big-screen, bigger budget genre works, *Touch of Death* is nonetheless an effectively revolting and brutally humorous film, loaded with graphic gore (much of it later recycled in *Cat In the Brain*), weird sex (girls do get naked but many of them are deformed, or in one case sport a beard and Elvis-approved sideburns!) and the kind of mildly misogynist mean-spiritedness not seen since the director's earlier and almost unbearably cruel *New York Ripper*.

Shriek Show provides an acceptable print (although this low-budget small-screen opus probably always looked pretty rough) and a "fake" commentary by Fulci, apparently culled from Italian TV interviews, making this a disc fans will definitely want to own.

Chris Alexander

VERY UNREQUITED LOVE

LIVING DOLL (1990)

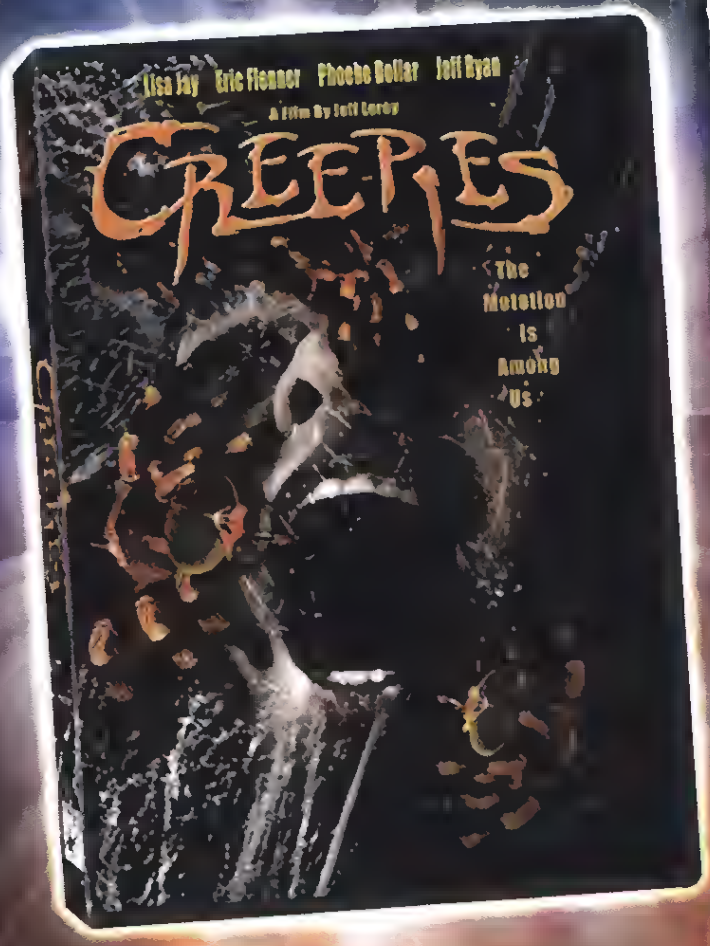
Starring Mark Jax, Katie Orgill and Eartha Kitt
Directed by Peter Litten and George Dugdale
Written by Paul Hart-Wilden, Mark Ezra and George Dugdale
Mondo Macabro

The cool thing about niche markets is that there are always niches between the niches. And somewhere between the meticulously restored, multiple-bonus-feature-enriched treasures on offer from Anchor Bay and the grimy grindhouse goodness of Something Weird Video, we now have Mondo Macabro to thank for unearthing, refurbishing and reissuing such sordid delights as *Satanico Pandemonium*, *Clonus*, *Alucarda* and *Seven Women For Satan*. *Living Doll* may not be their most outrageous or accomplished title to date, but it's nonetheless a delightfully fucked-up little number, gory and silly, yet weirdly earnest underneath it all.

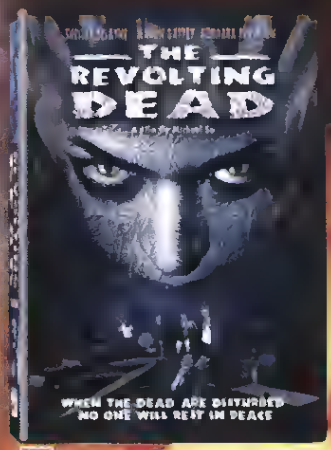


Mark Jax plays Howard Adams, a lonely, dorky medical student who pines away for gorgeous Christine (Orgill), a flower vendor at the hospital where Howard moonlights as a morgue attendant. One fatal drunk driving accident later, Christine winds up on Howard's slab, and the poor boy just can't resist striking up a romance with his newfound post-mortem poontang.

"EIGHT LEGGED FREAKS meets RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD."

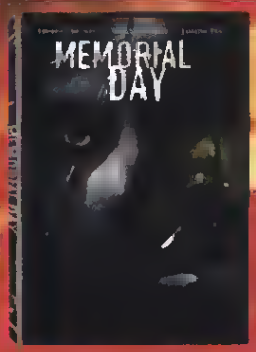


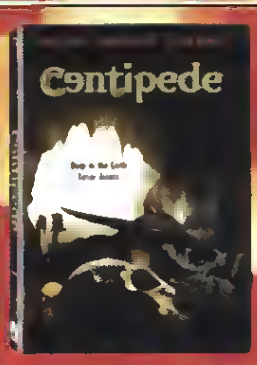
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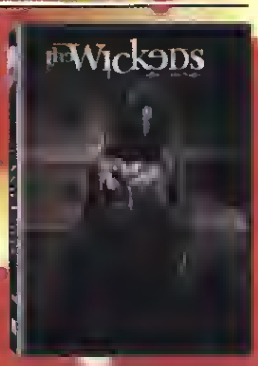




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Living Doll *Mark Jax gives necrophilia a try.*

Deranged misfits obsessed with dead flesh have been depicted with considerably more sophistication in films as diverse as *Aftermath* (*RM#47*), *Kissed* and *May*, but there's still a lot going on just beneath the surface of *Living Doll*. The power politics of unrequited love get sweetly skewered here as Howard finally gets the girl of his dreams under his control only to find out that she still controls him in a hundred unexpected ways. Jax, in a truly striking performance, makes Howard a sympathetic anti-hero.

Despite the absence of any commentary track, Mondo Macabro's disc includes interviews with Jax and writer Paul Hart-Wilden, stills, posters, a trailer and an hour-long documentary on the making of *Don't Open 'Til Christmas*, a previous effort by *Living Doll*'s prolific B-producer Dick Randall. The 16:9 original negative transfer is relatively clean, which is really a bonus given that even a skanky VHS version of this minor gem would still be worth a look. And finally, on behalf of the Rue Crew, I'd like to belatedly welcome relative newcomer Mondo Macabro to the exalted upper echelon of cool-as-fuck reissue houses.

John W. Bowen

A RINGING EUROHORROR ENDORSEMENT

A BELL FROM HELL (1973)

Starring Renaud Verley, Viveca Lindfors and Alfredo Mayo
Directed by Claudio Guerin Hill
Written by Santiago Moncada
Pathfinder Home Entertainment



With a leisurely pace, decidedly Euro take on taboo sexuality and beautiful art house photography, *A Bell From Hell* easily qualifies as a companion piece to Harry Kumel's *Daughters of Darkness*. But instead of lesbian vampires, the French/Spanish co-production provides a fascinating portrait of a young man who may be completely insane or perhaps just a free spirit trapped in an intolerable situation.

After getting released from the mental hospital, John (Verley) gets a job at a slaughterhouse, but soon quits, saying that he's learned all he needs to know (the scenario is made all the more disturbing by the inclusion of actual scenes of Verley butchering cattle).

John then visits Aunt Marta, who he blames for his mother's suicide and who had him committed in the first place. There are also varying degrees of sexual tension between John and her daughters (his cousins, introduced in a stunning slow-motion shot emerging from the mist), their joint history includes both consensual sex and accusations of rape.

But it gets weirder. John, a twisted practical joker, fools a former lover into thinking he gouged his eyes out, and later feigns broken arms to trick a would-be rapist into lending him a hand at the urinal. Ultimately, John's vengeance against those who have wronged him takes on the form of a practical joke so delightfully un-PC that it's doubtful it would be attempted in a modern film. Like the slaughterhouse footage, it's portrayed unflinchingly, giving the movie a raw edge that's impossible to turn away from.

Although pretentious moments such as an old man spouting inanities like: "The owl hooted three times when your parents secretly copulated to conceive you", will leave you scratching your head, the lush Spanish locales, a solid cast that includes Viveca Lindfors (*Creepshow*) and Maribel Martin (*Blood Spattered Bride*), and a script by *Hatchet for the Honeymoon* writer Santiago Moncada, make for essential retro-Eurohorror viewing.

The DVD print is pristine, and extras include a film scholar's commentary – in place of director Claudio Guerin Hill, who ominously fell to his death on the last day of shooting, from the bell tower featured in the film. From Hell indeed.

Matt Bradshaw





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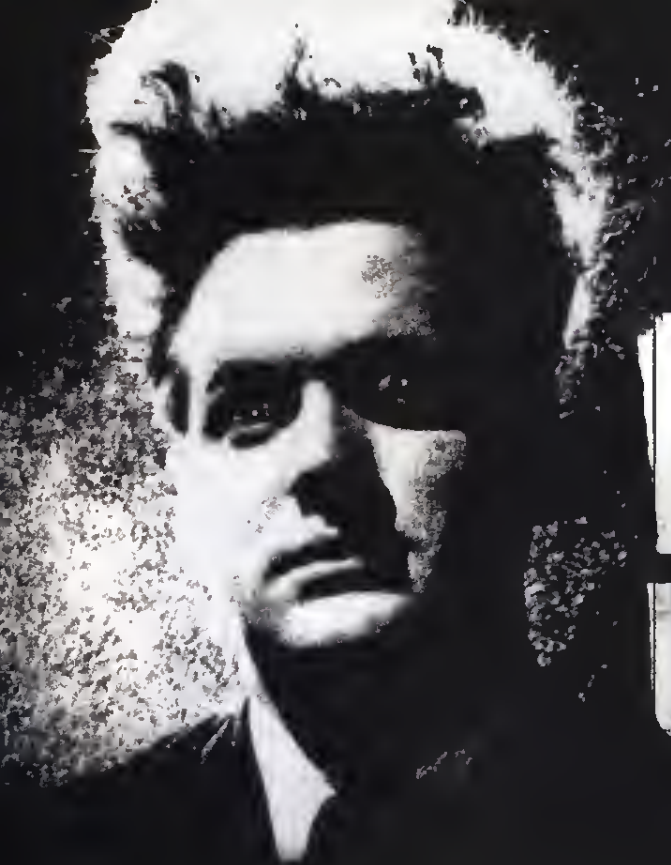
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LYNCH UNLOCKED

BY OWEN LIVERMORE

In an empty sound booth, surrounded by nothing but a hanging old-style microphone and wafting cigarette smoke, David Lynch waxes nostalgic about a dead cat. His voice picks up with excitement as he describes carefully dissecting its belly to see the brilliant colours of the intestines and organs, before exposure to the air slowly drains the colours away.

Just barely audible in the soundtrack, a desolate, rumbling breeze whistles. Lynch goes on to mention in this story about *Eraserhead* that the cat unfortunately didn't make it into the movie. Suddenly, the opening menu of the new DVD – an unrecognizable animal corpse squirming on the end of a wire in an endless loop stuck to the shoe of a frustrated Jack Nance – begins to make sense.

To dedicated fans, the long wait for the DVD release of *Eraserhead* was likely just as frustrating. Only a few years ago, Lynch chose to produce and release his 1977 debut feature exclusively through his own website (www.davidlynch.com), along with e separate collection of his short films dating back to the '60s. The result was a pristine image and soundtrack, with impressive packaging, and a hefty price tag of $40 USD for each release (or $75 USD for a box set of both). Now, for the first time in North America, *Eraserhead* is widely available to retailers, with *The Short Films of David Lynch* as a bonus disc. Here's a look at the filmmaker's disturbing debut and the seldom seen work that made him an icon of surrealist horror.

ERASERHEAD (1977) 108 MINUTES

Few, if any, cinematic experiences compare to Lynch's career-making *Eraserhead*, an almost mind-boggling five-year effort for Lynch and his small crew, conceived in an abandoned corner of the AFI facilities in Los Angeles. The production of the film, which was barely financed and rife with hardships, is now the stuff of legend.

Life began to imitate art for the small crew, who found themselves hopelessly mired in a closed world of industrial decomposition. And probably the most interesting character in the film is the landscape: broken down, claustrophobic spaces inspired by the Los Angeles shooting location and the dangerous Philadelphia neighbourhoods where Lynch and his wife had lived in the past. The director persevered during the epic shoot by scrounging for every piece of equipment he could get his hands on and taking odd jobs (like paper routes) to sustain himself. Good luck and well-timed support from his dedicated friends kept the production going as the years piled on. Of course, Lynch loved every minute of it, and his gamble paid off as the film began playing at midnight screenings and critics slowly embraced it.

The avant-garde masterpiece, which heavily influenced Shinya Tsukamoto's *Tetsuo: Iron Man* (*RM#45*), fetishizes a bleak, steamy, mechanical world awash in industrial decay. An unnerving soundtrack full of factory noise and other unnatural sounds sets the mood as Lynch explores the paranoid world of his luckless hero Henry (Jack Nance), Henry's spastic girlfriend Mary X (Charlotte Stewart) and their extremely disturbing offspring. The spurting, foetal monstrosity, simply known as "the baby", which may or may not be a puppet or a real animal foetus (rumours and mystery persist), still perplexes and horrifies.

Given the director's distrust of the DVD format (because it allows for viewers to watch films in fragments), Lynch films have never been brimming with extras, so the separate commentary provided by the director is a real treat. In his introductions to *Eraserhead* and the short films, Lynch describes the predominantly random twists of fate that sparked his creative impulse. His stories often delve into decidedly creepy territory, only to be followed by recollections about something as harmless as sandwiches or pie. Still, the often evasive and coy Lynch is not willing to give full disclosure to his fans. For example, in true Lynch fashion, talk of the "baby" is noticeably absent in his *Eraserhead* commentary. In the past, he's avoided questions about the true nature of it, even implying that it was found and not made.

After an extraordinary career spanning over 30 years, and an inadvertent transformation into a pop culture icon, Lynch remains as influential as ever (the word "Lynchian" commonly describes any film or filmmaker displaying the slightest hint of weirdness). *Eraserhead* and the short film anthology provide compelling reasons why he'll persevere as both an important, original and inherently disturbing filmmaker.

THE SHORT FILMS OF DAVID LYNCH



SIX MEN GETTING SICK (1967) 4 MIN

Lynch's earliest film, made because he wondered what one of his paintings would look like if it moved, is a looped, hypnotic and thoroughly creepy work demonstrating his interest in colour and texture. In other words: six tortured faces – projected onto a specially sculpted screen and animated – puke paint over an intentionally grating soundtrack.

THE ALPHABET (1968) 4 MIN

Lynch begins his long-running interest in the relationship between dream states and reality, with a mix of vaguely Monty Python-style animation and live action, inspired by a nightmare his wife's niece had about reciting the alphabet. In it, a strange animated shape disgorges the letters of the alphabet (as a child's voice calls them out), before it bleeds all over a young girl, who in turn vomits blood

THE GRANDMOTHER (1970) 34 MIN

One of the director's biggest breaks came when he was awarded a grant from the American Film Institute to produce his first foray into narrative filmmaking: *The Grandmother*. Much longer than previous works, partially animated, and employing bright colours on an all-black backdrop, it's a study of the family unit, violence, and decay. The metaphor-rich "story" concerns a frail boy who's bullied by his screaming parents. He grows a giant plant resembling entrails on his bed, which then gives birth to a grandmother. Lynch's obsession with bizarre organic forms literally takes root here.

THE AMPUTEE (1974) 5 MIN

When Lynch was asked by the AFI to test stocks of videotape, he used the opportunity to bang out a short about a wheelchair-bound amputee who voices a banal, oblivious inner monologue as a nurse tries desperately to stop her leg stumps from hemorrhaging. Lynch uses the grainy, indistinct quality of early video to his advantage, creating a hazy, unsettling distortion.

THE COWBOY AND THE FRENCHMAN (1988) 25 MIN

Lynch's non-horror short produced for French television amusingly chronicles the surreal meeting of two stereotypes – an American cowboy and a beret-clad Frenchman – with positive results (of course, this was back in the time before Freedom Fries). Lynch fave Harry Dean Stanton is a standout here as a slightly unstable, screaming cowboy, begging comparisons to Lynch's own portrayal of the screaming FBI director in *Twin Peaks*

LUMIÈRE AND COMPANY SHORT (1996) 55 SECONDS

The final short on the disc is Lynch's minute-long entry for the compilation *Lumière and Company*, produced on the 100th anniversary of cinema and made with the actual Lumière camera. While the best part of the short is the actual look obtained by the antique hand-cranked camera, Lynch manages to deliver a dense story given the extreme time constraints. It also features one of the most disturbing images in Lynch's filmography, as arcane creatures walk past a giant vat housing a naked, tortured woman. As *Eraserhead* does for black and white 16mm and *The Amputee* does for muddy video, this piece proves Lynch is adept at bending the realities of the medium to his surreal dark desires.





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A GIFT FROM THE CRYPT

BY JOSEPH O'BRIEN

The Twilight Zone was famed for its social commentary and ironic twists, *The Outer Limits* for its striking cinematography and parade of monsters sublime and ridiculous, but when it came to venal, despicable liars, con artists and murderers getting theirs by the most macabre means possible, nobody did it better than *Tales From the Crypt*.

The show made an impressive debut in 1989, backed by an A-list production powerhouse of EC Comics aficionados – Walter Hill, Robert Zemeckis, Richard Donner, David Giler and Joel Silver – who used their Hollywood powers to secure name writers, directors and stars, taking what could have been a cheap cash-in and transforming each episode into a slick, colourful and gleefully sinister half-hour.

Better yet, broadcasting on HBO rather than a more traditional TV network meant the initial trial run season of six episodes (collected here for the first time from Warner Home Video) could also push the boundaries of sex, violence and general bad behaviour beyond even their original comic book source material.

As with any anthology series, the success rate is scattershot, but these initial episodes of *Tales* are assured and set a tone that the series maintained throughout its next six seasons. Frequent Walter Hill company player Bill Sadler stars in The Man Who Was Death (he would later go on to play the actual Grim Reaper role in *Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey*) as an executioner who delights in pulling the switch on the condemned. When the state repeals the death penalty, Death decides to freelance, with unsurprising results. Hill's knack for heightened gritty reality serves him well, but the episode lacks the macabre humour, and feels out of step with what *Tales* was to become.

Better is Robert Zemeckis' And All Through The House, a cozy Christmas fable about a murderous wife (Mary Ellen Trainor) whose attempts to dispose of her husband's body are complicated by the arrival of an axe-wielding maniac (Larry Drake) in a Santa suit. Positively cheery in its mean-spiritedness, it remains the quintessential *Tales* tale, thick with black humour and Hitchcockian aplomb.

Third big gun Richard Donner directs Dig That Cat... He's Real Gone, featuring the great Joe Pantaliono as a man gifted with nine lives but cursed with poor counting skills. The circus-set story is appropriately over-the-top, though it doesn't match the wit of Zemeckis' installment.

Despite a game script by *Night of the Creeps* scribe Fred Dekker (who also penned And All Through The House), Only Skin Deep is the weakest entry. Director Howard Deutch, known mainly for broad comedy, applies too heavy a hand to the story of a prostitute (the badly miscast Lea Thompson) who pawns her beauty and then tries to get it back. The result is too grim to be as much fun as it should be.

Tom (*Fright Night*) Holland's Lover Come Back To Me and Mary (*Pet Sematary*) Lambert's Collection Completed round out the set, and are more indicative of the groove the show fell into once its producers left it to its own devices and returned to the business of making blockbusters: competent, occasionally inspired set-up/punchline stones with hordes of great character actors coming to bad ends, all sandwiched between the Crypt Keeper's increasingly wince-inducing puns.

Surprisingly, considering the money that went into these, the picture quality's only so-so (Only Skin Deep looks particularly rough). In addition, the only special feature is a "bonus disc" containing Chip Selby's documentary *Tales From The Crypt: From Comic Books To Television*, which I reviewed in its stand-alone form (*RM#43*), and actually caught some heat for when I suggested it was a puff-piece promoting the series. Imagine my shock discovering it here being used as exactly that. To make the underhanded double-dippery worse, that stand-alone disc's most notable feature, a fly-on-the-wall round table featuring Ray Bradbury and Al Feldstein, is not duplicated here. It means you'll have to throw down for both of them and use one as a shiny drink coaster. ☠



M. Emmet Walsh gets stuffed in episode six, ***Collection Completed***

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CINEMARQUEE

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HUSH.. HUSH, SWEET CHARLOTTE (1964)

Starring Bette Davis, Olivia de Havilland and Joseph Cotten
Directed by Robert Aldrich
Written by Henry Farrell and Lukas Heller
Twentieth Century Fox

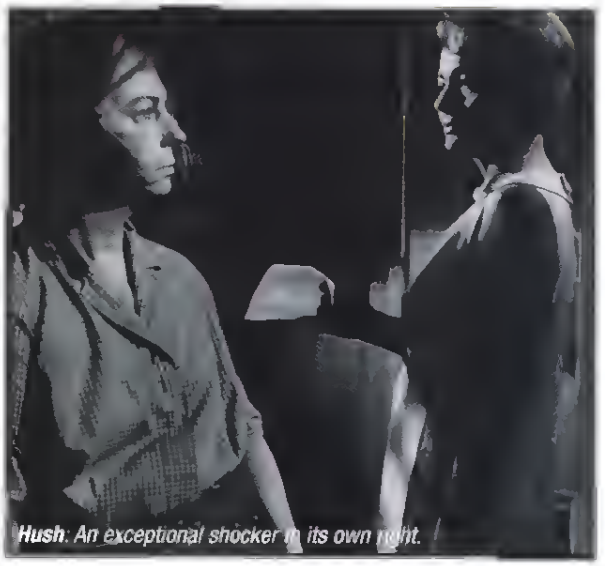
After the Oscar-winning success of 1962's *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?*, director Robert Aldrich found himself at the forefront of a new trend in horror: over-the-top thrillers that put moviedom's best known leading ladies through a sleazy ordeal of intense mental anguish. As a follow-up, Aldrich prepared *Hush... Hush, Sweet Charlotte*, a film that would re-team *Baby Jane* co-stars Joan Crawford and Bette Davis for a Hollywood bitchfest bar none.



In the end, he got more than he bargained for, as the vicious real-life rivalry between his two lead actresses ultimately led the studio to replace Crawford with Olivia de Havilland, a scandal that often overshadows the importance of Aldrich's film to this day. That's unfortunate, since *Sweet Charlotte* is an exceptional shocker in its own right, an excellent companion piece to the critically admired *Baby Jane* that's heightened by larger-than-life performances and some simply grandiose gore.

The plot of the film is entirely familiar: a distinctly Tennessee Williams-styled spin on *Les Diabolique*. When her father demands that young Charlotte (Davis) break off her affair with married man John Mayhew (Bruce Dern), the unfaithful husband ends up losing his head to a razor-sharp cleaver. All evidence points to Charlotte as the killer, but her big shot daddy pulls a few strings to keep his daughter out of jail.

Almost 40 years later, Miriam Deering (de Havilland) returns to the house where her half-mad cousin Charlotte has lived in seclusion ever since. Now, with her crumbling manor slated for demolition, someone has unleashed a new campaign of terror against Charlotte, forcing her to relive the events of that murderous night.


Hush: An exceptional shocker in its own right.

Tapping into the sinful Southern corruption that pulsed through *The Bad Seed* and *Night of the Hunter* a decade earlier, *Sweet Charlotte* isn't afraid to take the story just a few excruciatingly evil steps further. John's initial butchering with the meat cleaver borrows some obvious editing tricks from *Psycho*, but it's notably more graphic, with candid close-ups of the mutilated body. Later, we see a decapitated head tumbling down the manor's grand staircase, and in a moment ripped out of an EC Comics panel: a drowned corpse appears at the top of the landing, covered in sinuous swamp vines

But more importantly, *Sweet Charlotte* gives both de Havilland and Davis equal opportunity to emote like their careers depended on it, reaching swirling heights of malice, madness, and desperation as they try to uncover the culprit. Between their heated acting match-ups, however, sneaks Agnes Moorehead as the foul-tempered servant Velma, with a dose of Southern sass that earned her one of the film's seven Oscar nominations. Smaller roles are filled by an equally impressive supporting cast, including the aforementioned Dern, George Kennedy, and William Campbell, as well as silent film star Mary Astor, in her final onscreen performance.

Frank de Vol's impressive score pulls its punches, but it's no match for the downright malicious, off kilter, melancholy theme music for which the film will forever be identified. Originally a love song written by John Mayhew to his young lover, the lyrics are perverted into "Chop .. Chop, Sweet Charlotte" by a children's choir over the opening credits. Once given this sinister double edge, the song becomes a motif for Charlotte's madness, repeated at every opportunity for appropriately creepy effect.

As Fox's new DVD shows, *Hush .. Hush, Sweet Charlotte* holds up quite well. Presented in pristine quality with a dry but well-researched commentary by critic Glenn Erickson, it's easy to see why the film's considered one of the finest Southern gothic horrors ever made; a sordid classic that helped morph the psychological terror of the '60s into the bloody drive-in delights that would follow

Paul Corupe



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"I WAS IN EUROTRASH HORROR HEAVEN AND THE MAN RESPONSIBLE WAS ONE JOSHUA CHEEK."

THE MAD MUSINGS OF A SCHIZOID CINEPHILE



by Chris Alexander



Dawn of the Dead

A few years back, a collection of stunning clamshell-packed Italian horror CMV Laservision soundtracks landed on my rickety, pulp-strewn desk. Included was Fabio Frizzi's dripping score for *The Gates of Hell*, the complete cues for the mod-ish zombie stomper *Living Dead at the Manchester Morgue* (a.k.a. *Let Sleeping Corpses Lie*), rare strains from underrated Italo gagfest *Ratman*, and on it went. I was in Eurotrash horror heaven and the man responsible was a one Joshua Cheek, a fledgling Yankee soundtrack collector who was just starting his own online import business, to be run in tandem with Italian label Hexacord. Cheek's barely coherent passion for all things dreamy, sticky and sanguinary rivaled my own and I was so smitten by this American fiend that I scribbled out a two-page love letter to the man (*RM#38*). Readers responded and he launched hexacord-america.com.

But that was not the end of the affair.

I revealed to the Cheeky one how much I love the score to Michael Armstrong's sickening masterpiece *Mark of the Devil*, how it defines much of my madness, specifically Michael Holm's sleazy musical cues. I told him how I would do anything to get my grubby grip on a copy of the soundtrack and a week later the damned thing was sitting in my mailbox. I spun it, I cried, I spun it again and wrote my living will. There was no way life could improve after this and I was fully prepared to die. But it was only the beginning.

Disc followed disc and I proceeded to tear my way through Hexacord's top-notch aural atrocities. I consumed Herman Kopp's ear canal-killing music for Jorg Buttgereit's sick shockers *Nekromantik* and *Der Totesking*, as well as Max Muller and Gundulla Schmitz's haunting, tragic soundscapes from the same transgressive director's ultra-bleak *Schramm*. Then there's Riz Ortalani's inappropriately beautiful and folk-tinged score for Deodato's unflinchingly brutal and unforgiving jungle munch melodrama *Cannibal Holocaust*, the wacky, rare and much-coveted alternate soundtrack to Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*, featuring only the US cut's scratch track library cues, including the famous klutz zombie escalator polka The Gonk. Add to this the complete score-ology of French art house horror king Jean Rollin, including aching, neo-classical themes from his incredible and tragic softcore shocker *Living Dead Girl* and the dreamy zombie trip *The Grapes of Death*.

But I knew I'd hit my zenith when Cheek sent a copy of Libra's funkadelic, almost unbearably intense riffs for Mario Bava's stunning swan-song slice of cinema *Shock* (a.k.a. *Beyond the Door 2*). See, Libra is actually Goblin in disguise, and this delirious disc is an example of the band working at the peak of their prog rock powers.

What really excites me about this stuff, and indeed what sets these European genre films apart from most American or Asian celluloid terror, is the bold way they use music and how it works both with and against the image, becoming a character in itself. Every kind of sonic sub-genre is represented in these films to underscore the sleazy, violent, stylized and sexually aware onscreen imagery – from harsh experimental noise (Kopp's work with Buttgereit) to full-blown electronic pop (Goblin's disco death from Argento's *Tenebre*); from dark freeform jazz (early '70s Ennio Morricone) to minimalist ambient drones (Simonetti's work in Fulci's *Conquest*). And it all works, spectacularly, with or without a point of cinematic reference.

Far too few fans are truly fighting the good fight, rolling up their sleeves and getting elbow deep into their destinies, but Cheek is doing just that. Not only does he "get it", he wants you to get it too. Alexander out. ☠

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IN THIS ISSUE!

THE WAR OF THE WORLDS ONLINE ADAPTATION
by H.G. Wells, Ian Edgington and D'Israeli *Dark Horse*

LITTLE BOOKS OF HORROR: THE WAR OF THE WORLDS
by H.G. Wells, Steve Niles and Ted McKeever *IDW*

THE WALKING DEAD VOL.3: SAFETY BEHIND BARS TPB
by Robert Kirkman and Charlie Adlard *Image*

LAND OF THE DEAD #1 (OF 5)
by George Romero, Chris Ryall & Gabriel Rodriguez *IDW*

SPIKE: OLD TIMES
by Peter David and Fernando Goni *IDW*

VENGEANCE OF THE MUMMY #1 (OF 2)
by Justin Gray and Zeu

"*They're already here.*" The slogan for the recent *War of the Worlds* movie takes on new meaning in this issue's column as we consider some modern comic book treatments of H.G. Wells' famous story – alas, one issue after *Rue Morgue* ran a cover story on the Martian invasion (not enough art was available at the previous press time).

First, we will let Wells himself speak, citing his text that describes the immortal first encounter with the aliens:

"A big greyish rounded bulk, the size, perhaps, of a bear, was rising slowly and painfully out of the cylinder. As it bulged up and caught the light, it glistened like wet leather. Two large dark-coloured eyes were regarding me steadfastly. The mass that framed them, the head of the thing, was rounded, and had, one might say, a face. There was a mouth under the eyes, the lipless brim of which quivered and panted, and dropped saliva. The whole creature heaved and pulsated convulsively. A lank tentacular appendage gripped the edge of the cylinder, another swayed in the air."



Wells goes on to describe "the strange horror" of the creature's appearance, including a "V-shaped mouth with its pointed upper lip", "absence of a chin beneath the lower lip" and "Gorgon groups of tentacles". Clearly, a young writer-in-the-making by the name of Howard Phillips Lovecraft took note of that last detail. He probably also registered the style of the next one: "Even at this first encounter, this first glimpse, I was overcome with disgust and dread."

Two different *War of the Worlds* comic adaptations currently on the market in decidedly different formats also recognize Wells' tactile vision on their own illustrated terms. And it's worth examining each of them briefly for their fidelity not just to the source, but also to the horrific imagination.



Ted McKeever's Kafka-esque Martians attack in Steve Niles' ***The War of the Worlds.***

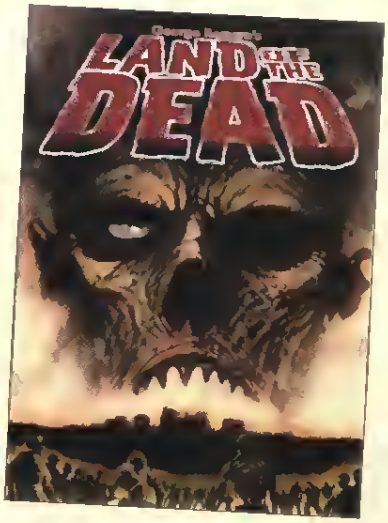
Dark Horse's version was launched in June on the company's website (darkhorse.com), with roughly ten new pages added every week until its July completion. Pictured here is the revelation of the Martians (page 20). Notice how artist D'Israeli successfully renders the beakish mouths sans chin and lips, and with drool somewhat akin to bile (all as described by Wells). Perhaps the greater liberties in this interpretation are the bird-like eyes (unspecified in the text) and what seems to be an admittedly less than impressive size. Or is it? Two pages later, it's revealed that these puckish-looking things are, if anything, bigger than bears. An astonishing perspective, and a suitably off-putting adaptation.

IDW's more traditional adaptation (it's an actual comic book you can hold in your hands) is part of the company's *Little Books of Horror* series, wherein writer Steve Niles abridges and rewrites classic horror texts for not-so-little readers (they're recommended for 18+). One of the interesting artistic choices in this series is the strict usage of double-page spreads throughout. For comparison's sake, pictured here is artist Ted McKeever's own take on the first Martian



sighting (pages 4-5). Discrepancies from Wells' vision are too numerous to list, though to be fair, one could interpret "lank tentacular appendages" as semi-arms and semi-legs. And in fairness to McKeever, Niles' purposely spare adaptation leaves a lot up to the artist: "Nothing about them was human. Truly hideous is what they were, with tentacles and a head that seemed one with its body!"

Of course, weighing these two images one against the other in isolation from their larger settings, one is inclined to get just a little bit more of a knee-jerk shudder from McKeever and IDW. Regardless, both works are fine efforts that help put Wells' story back where it belongs: out of the action category and back into the science horror group.



QUICK CUTS

I ripped through the latest riveting collected volume in the saga of *The Walking Dead* in less than 25 minutes – that's gotta be some kind of record. My wife had to stop me from getting on a plane to Kentucky, tracking down maverick writer Robert Kirkman and offering him our firstborn to tell me what's next. So I phoned him instead. The horrible truth is as follows: (1) On average, Kirkman's stories are plotted about a half-year ahead – as in, one trade paperback at a time. And with a track record as consistent as the three books that have been collected to date, the formula's clearly working. (2) He has easily enough plot points for another five years (roughly, issue #50), but his goal is to break 100 issues and that's entirely up to the fans voting with their hard-earned dollars. (3) His writing style is a metaphor for zombieism: prone to mayhem and carnage. He honestly has no "bigger picture" idea of how things are going to end. Reluctant hero Rick could go down for the count any day, or maybe never. And when Dex and Andrew "bijacked the prison" at the end of book three, they were hijacking the script as well, because Kirkman goes with the flow. Go with him and you will not be disappointed. This is definitely *Rue Morgue*'s favourite monthly, no question.



Like the script from which it's adapted, *Land of the Dead* #1 opens with a bloody bang and, shambling monsters notwithstanding, it's pretty much relentless in terms of pacing. Some of Romero's jingoistic dialogue actually comes across better on the printed page. (Case in point. "Nice shooting." "Good shooting. Ain't no such thing as nice shooting.") Art is functional, conveying action with *Batman* TV angles rather than actual choreography. But at the end of the day (of the dead), zombie heads exploding are zombie heads exploding, and there's enough red ink spilled on a pretty much per-page basis to make fans happy. Speaking of appeasement, John Leguizamo owes penciller Gabriel Rodriguez a case of brewskies for rendering his character, Cholo, with a heroic and decidedly non-equine jaw!

Lord knows it ain't easy coming up with credible excuses to redeem mixed-up mavericks who are basically textbook-definition villains (George Lucas, I'm looking at you here). But for the *Buffy* spin-off *Spike: Old Times*, Peter David manages to accomplish this marginally difficult task with both wit and aplomb. Instead of going for the obvious, tried-and-true "team-up" comic formula, David keeps his well-balanced Buffyverse one-shot in continuous confrontational mode. *Angel* fans rejoice: here is the untold story of Spike and Halfrek; friends, lovers and nemeses – a volatile combination in a volatile, *Terminator*-type tale. *Buffy* detractors, keep guffawing: the TV series' vampire henchmen still look like they're key grips wearing no-budget latex Halloween masks.



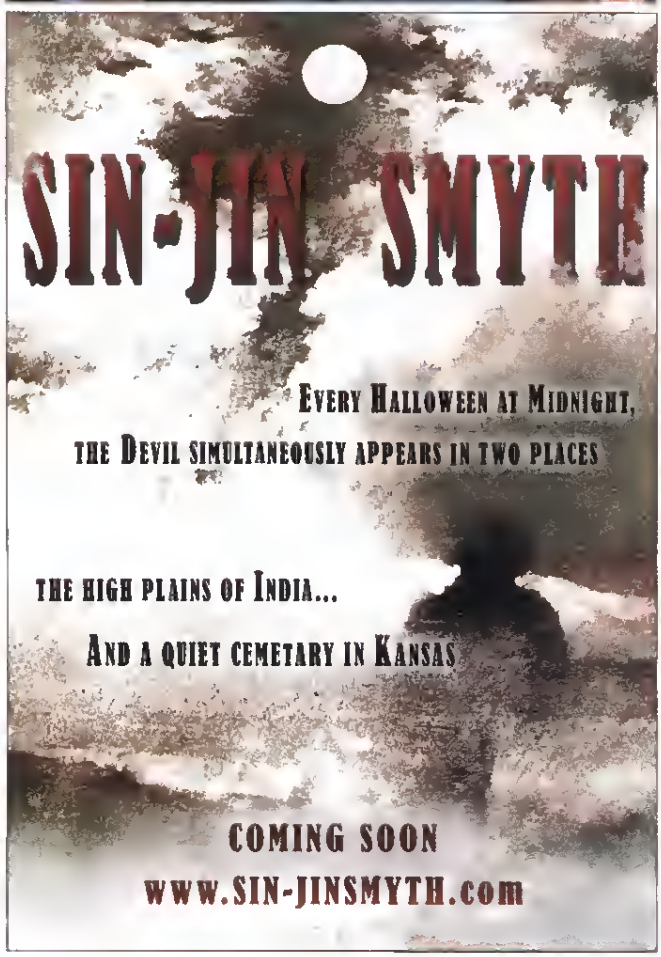
Whoever knows fear burns at the touch of *The Mummy*? Stranger things have happened, friends, and in the case of *Vengeance of The Mummy*, stranger is better. This modern incarnation of one of horror's legendary monsters is less of an update than a complete reboot. The millennium Mummy is a sexy blonde lab technician and the almost Frankensteinian science-gone-awry central plot involves synthetic bandages developed for reconstructive surgery that take on a life of their own. The dialogue's a little hammy and the lab coat love triangle's beyond cheesy, but it's forgivable because the how and why of the Mummy's existence is so darn nifty. As for this review's opening line: if any of the dozen or so writers who ever tackled *Mun-Thing* over the creature's long, lacklustre history had managed to come up with an explanation for his "touchy" powers as good as the one here, well, Marvel would have had itself a nice little eco-terror book rather than a notoriously eco-terrible one.

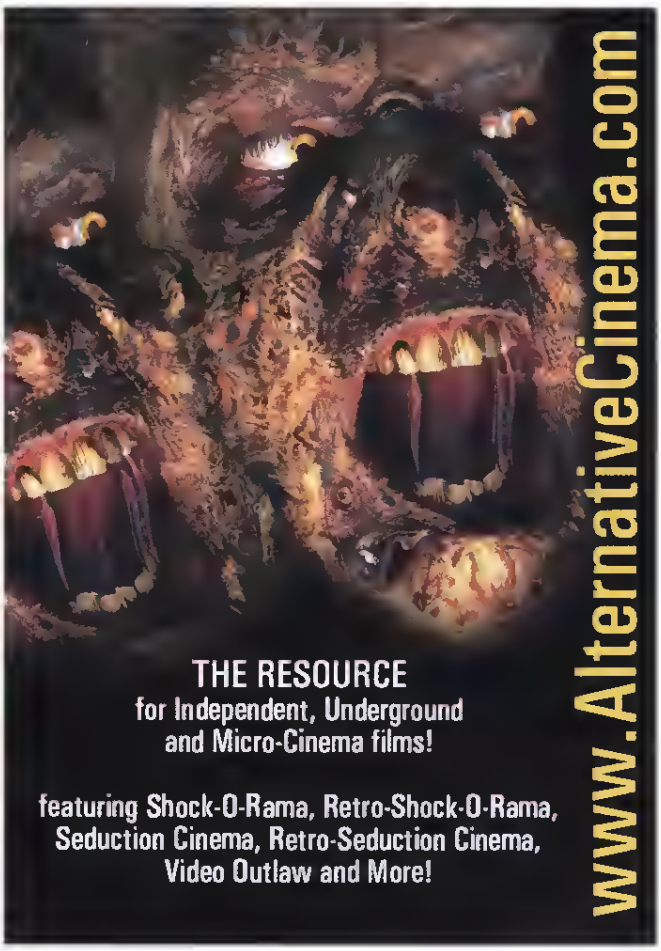


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the Ninth Circle BOOKS

Haunted America • Tenser's Tome • Campbell's Retail Hell



Spectral America: Phantoms and the National Imagination

Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, ed.

Popular Press

Lots of folk like to tell ghost stories. Then there's the kind of people who tell stories about ghost stories. This anthology gathers essays from the latter group in an examination of why the last century's artists and academics seemed so obsessed with phantasmagoria. Editor Jeffrey Weinstock points out that since the 1980s, beginning with *Poltergeist* in '82, his country has been quite haunted, increasingly so as the millennium approached. In his introduction, The Spectral Turn, he argues that such fascination is the by-product of our own unease about faith and justice, and our own place in space and time, and that despite an increase in popularity of late, ghosts have always been part of American society. "Ghosts do 'cultural work', but the work they perform changes according to the developing needs of the living," he explains.

Spectral America documents hauntings in American culture (so nothing about Hamlet's father here), beginning with the Salem witch trials up to *The Sixth Sense*. The tone is scholarly, but not so much that an avid reader can't make his/her way through with a bit of effort. The facts and arguments in chapters on contemporary film and books, such as Stephen King's Vintage Ghost Cars, will be familiar to most *RM* types, but can still be enjoyed if approached like interesting conversations with a passionate, inquisitive fan.

The book's attention to lesser-known works is most educational and entertaining, although not all seem worthy of inclusion. (Ghosting HIV/AIDS, a 20-page study of an unknown short story, could definitely get the chop.) Best among them: The Politics of Heaven by John J. Kuchich, who explains the changing perception of heaven in the late 1800s as influenced by the Native American Ghost Dance myth phenomenon and recorded in the works of Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (*The Gates Ajar*) and Mark Twain's *Extracts from Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven*. If *Spectral America* accomplishes naught more than exposing Twain's version of heaven – interspecies! – to a wider audience, it's a worthy endeavour and a worthwhile read.

Liisa Ladouceur



Beasts in the Cellar: The Exploitation Film Career of Tony Tenser

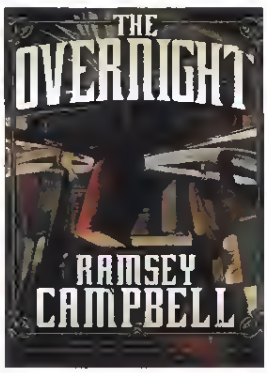
by John Hamilton

FAB Press

Disclosure: I'd never heard of Tony Tenser when I began reading John Hamilton's *Beasts In the Cellar: The Exploitation Film Career of Tony Tenser*. Likely as not, many of you won't know the name either. But many will recognize the films he produced, including *Repulsion*, *Witchfinder General*, *The Blood On Satan's Claw* and *The Creeping Flesh*. More than simply a biography of a smart and prolific producer, *Beasts* is also a de facto history text (albeit an engaging one) on a fertile period in British genre cinema.

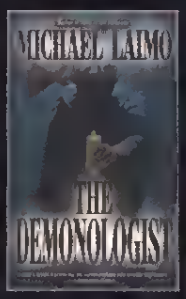
Tenser – a businessman, not an artist – may seem an odd choice of subject, but it was the man's business philosophy (make movies people want to see for as little money as possible) which resulted not only in the genre favourites listed above but also kick-started the careers of young talent like directors Roman Polanski and Michael Reeves, and actors Klaus Kinski and Catherine Deneuve.

Tenser's story is also that of '60s British moviemaking in general. The ex-cinema manager's first films, like the coy nudie "documentary" *Naked – As Nature Intended*, reflected the English public's abiding but shameful interest in sex, while the era's increasingly permissive attitudes resulted in increasingly explicit and disturbing ventures like 1970's *Satan's Claw* and '74's *Frightmare*. Hamilton also delves into the friendly rivalries between Tenser's company, Tigon, and the other leading British genre producers of the '60s, Hammer and Amicus, as well as Tigon's ongoing skirmishes with head censor John Trevelyan, by all accounts a reasonable chap open to persuasion.



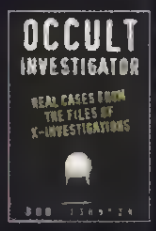


The Grim Reader



THE DEMONOLOGIST
Michael Laimo
Leisure Horror
Tight and conceptually unique, *The Demonologist* creeps out not only protagonist Bev Mathers' brain but the reader's as well. Mathers is at the centre of an eerie possession that tears at the inside of his skull while evil forces attempt to resurrect thirteen gruesome demons. Packed with psychological torment and copious amounts of gore, this is excellent writing that escapes colloquialisms without losing us common folk.

Keith Carman



OCCULT INVESTIGATOR: REAL CASES FROM THE FILES OF X-INVESTIGATIONS
Bob Johnson
Citadel Press
Johnson, founder of the paranormal investigation agency X-Investigations, allows readers to join him as he reminisces about ten of his most unusual cases. While *Occult Investigator* is a fun read, it is difficult to swallow as fact when the 222-page paperback does not contain a single photograph or photocopy of the purported "evidence" or surveillance materials gathered. Trust no one.

Monica S. Kuebler



RESURRECTION DREAMS
Richard Laymon
Dorchester Publishing
A gory necromantic novel isn't a new idea, but to be fair, the late Richard Laymon does add a few original twists. Dr. Frankenstein-type geek Melvin Dobbs can't wait to resurrect the girl he loves (well, lusts after). One problem: she isn't dead... yet. If you don't mind warmed-over plots and prose that's subtle as a sledgehammer, *Resurrection Dreams* is fun in a *Beavis and Butthead* kind of way.

Richard Gavin



Beasts in the Cellar *Diary of a cult film producer*

Hamilton has exhaustively researched his subject and, perhaps not surprisingly, exhaustion is the occasional result. The corporate dealings which eventually unravelled Tigon and, in turn, Tenser's career, are not always interesting. Horror fans may also find themselves skimming over the production histories of forgotten comedies.

FAB Press has done a crackerjack design job, illustrating the massive tome with Tigon's often risque promo pix (lots of bosoms and monsters) and vintage ads featuring some of the purplest prose imaginable. It's a handsome volume with appeal to horror buffs, film fans and anyone else interested in the often dirty business of making movies.

Sean Plummer

The Overnight
Ramsey Campbell
Tor Books

That a legend like Ramsey Campbell was forced to take a day job while vastly inferior writers continue to make the bestseller lists evidences just how fickle the book world can be. However, *The Overnight,* a novel born of Campbell's stint as a Borders clerk, proves he's lost none of his storytelling abilities. He's still capable of seeing the darkness in even the coziest of places, and still able to evoke a primal dread of the ineffable.

In the novel, Texts, a successful American bookstore chain, decides to branch out across the pond. The Manchester suburb of Fenny Meadows is their chosen site for the flagship store. Unfortunately, it's an old land with a grim and bloody history, and as the Texts staff prepares for a pre-Christmas inspection, the dark secrets of Fenny Meadows' past lurch into the present. Books are inexplicably water-damaged, the elevator (or "lift" if you partake of afternoon tea) goes wonky, co-workers turn on one another, strange shapes slither about the shelves, and fog perpetually clouds the plaza. But it's just the beginning.

Campbell plays it cool in the early chapters. He takes his time (sometimes a bit too much time) building his characters. Their various fears are developed at a base level, with xenophobia, homophobia, various other social tensions and resurfacing childhood fears thrown into the mix. All of this adds a layer of believability to the supernatural terrors. By the time you reach the titular overnight shift section of the story, you feel like you know these people – a very rare thing in contemporary horror fiction.

With a skilled blend of terror, mystery, and Campbell's trademark black comedy, the last quarter of the book simmers. The climax – the ultimate jab at the corporate mindset – is simultaneously frightening and hilarious. Although *The Overnight* has elements that are frustratingly vague (the secrets of Fenny Meadows are never fully divulged), it is a highly literate, meticulously worded, and refreshingly subtle take on retail hell.

Richard Gavin



The Ninth Circle Presents

IN THE WORLD OF MODERN HORROR LITERATURE, THOMAS LIGOTTI IS A RARE THROWBACK, CRAFTING SHORT STORIES IN THE BLEAK, POETIC STYLE OF POE AND LOVECRAFT. IN ANTICIPATION OF TWO NEW ANTHOLOGIES AND A BOOK ON FEAR PHILOSOPHY DUE THIS FALL, THE AUTHOR EXPLAINS HIS INTENSELY FOCUSED DEVOTION TO THE GENRE.

OLD WORLD WEIRD

BY RICHARD GAVIN

Penitent darkness, mannequins staggering through expressionistic slums, a grotesque universe in which all things, humanity included, are meaningless. These are but a few of the nightmares conveyed by Thomas Ligotti, an author whom many consider the greatest horror writer since H. P. Lovecraft.

"It was Lovecraft's stories that put the idea in my head that I should write horror tales," Ligotti tells *Rue Morgue*. "I thought that those who tried to write like Lovecraft failed in every respect. So my first ambition as a horror writer was to contribute one good tale to the Mythos. After writing dozens of stories and destroying them, I finally wrote The Last Feast Of Harlequin, which I dedicated to his memory."



Penning tales in the poetic – and some would say archaic – style of Lovecraft and Poe, and claiming "practically zero" knowledge of modern horror, Ligotti is expectedly virtually unknown in the horror mainstream. He earned cult status when his alchemical blend of lavish, almost hallucinatory prose and grimly nihilistic world view drew the attention of readers and critics after he was first published in underground 'zines.

Born in Detroit in 1953, Ligotti began writing horror while attending college. His first anthology, *Songs of a Dead Dreamer*, appeared in 1986, followed by collections like *Grimscribe* and *Noctuary*. Aside from the aptly-titled short novel *My Work Is Not Yet Done*, the author almost exclusively works within the short story format.

"There would be no point in my writing a long horror novel," he says. "Unless I followed the conventions of the realistic horror novel, it would be a total flop both commercially and artistically. I guess I write the way I do for the same reason that Milton's Lucifer in *Paradise Lost* famously declares, 'I will not serve,' rather than 'No way, José.' Books written in colloquial language should have an expiration date stamped onto them."

Not surprisingly, Ligotti's characters, settings, and storylines are steeped in Poe and Lovecraft, transporting readers to the outer margins of delirium and despair, into a realm where even the mundane becomes ominous and unnatural. Take for example Dr. Voke And Mr. Veech, set in a sickly cartoon world of cackling automatons, where a Caligari-esque mad doctor gleefully toils in the loft of a shadowy slum, or The Night School, where a handful of pupils have the misfortune of Instructor Carniero's education regarding "the Nocturnal Product" – an intelligent and omnipotent darkness that seethes within and upon all things.

Although Ligotti is also a screenwriter, whose projects include an unproduced *X-Files* script, he's perhaps the genre's most devout purist – a writer for whom horror is more than a marketing category.

"Writers are just like other people in that they don't like to be bummed out and try not to bum out their readers," he says. "Even when they write about people who are sick and miserable, they almost always find some redeeming value in their sickness and misery or else impart a message that is affirmative or cautionary through their narratives. The great horror writers, however, are outsiders to their society and they write for other outsiders. The upshot is that it's all entertainment. It's just a matter of who you're entertaining."

Ligotti explores that idea further in an upcoming "meditation" on the genre, titled *The Conspiracy Against the Human Race: On the Horror of Life and the Art of Horror* set for release this October.

"It could be described as a meditation on why, in the words of Lovecraft's Arthur Jermyn, 'Life is a hideous thing,'" says the author.

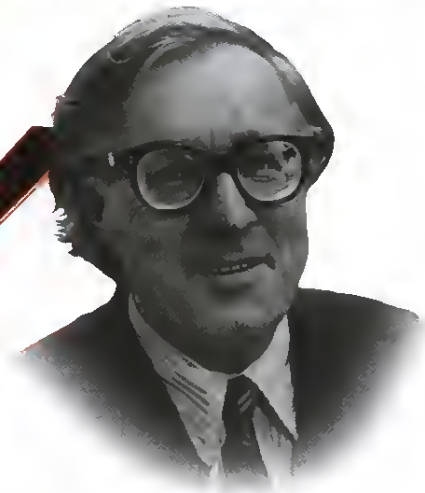
This autumn, look for the release of two other collections: *Teatro Grottesco* (Durtro Press), a hard-bound volume containing formerly uncollected tales sure to delight devotees, and *The Shadow at the Bottom of the World* (Cold Spring Press), a paperback primer for readers unfamiliar with Ligotti's works.

Two new non-fiction books from Harper Collins by and about legendary author **RAY BRADBURY** paint a life as fantastic as it is influential.

Ninth Circle Presents

Bradbury Lives!

by Joseph O'Brien



The Bradbury Chronicles: The Life of Ray Bradbury

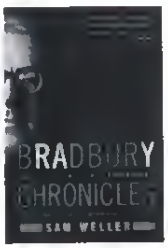
by Sam Weller

Bradbury Speaks: Too Soon From the Cave, Too Far From the Stars

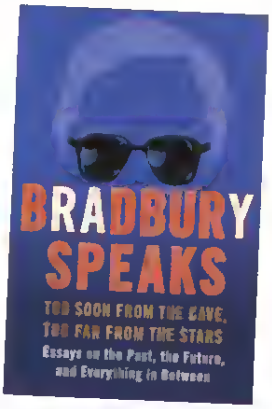
by Ray Bradbury

It's almost impossible to imagine a world without Ray Bradbury. Fortunately, we don't have to, and thanks to a pair of new releases, we can enjoy a fresh perspective and an insightful look back on the life and mind of one of the greatest dark fantasists of this or any other century.

Sam Weller's biography, *The Bradbury Chronicles*, comprehensively covers the author's entire life from his birth in Waukegan, Illinois (a day he insists he has full recall of; the memory would later form the basis of one of his most unsettling tales, The Small Assassin) to the present, with stops at crucial points in-between.



While it is incumbent upon responsible biographers to approach their subjects accurately, the facts of Bradbury's life are not so essential to understanding the man and his work as the truth of his life. Weller is a Bradbury scholar (he teaches the only college-level course on Bradbury in the US) and, while clearly qualified for the task of recounting the events of the man's life, he too often elevates his subject beyond his own reach. Weller seems overtly aware of the weight on his shoulders; in striving to render a serious and definitive treatment, his writing often becomes so dry it threatens to snap. Worse, this prosaic, pedantic approach fails to communicate the magical spirit of his subject, as though he had built up an immunity to Bradbury's infectious enthusiasm through long-term exposure.



But no matter how they're told, the details of Bradbury's life – filled with characters and events as vivid and colourful as anything in his fiction – cannot help but inspire. His improbable ten months in the womb, a phantom sibling no one can remember; a legendary encounter with road show magician Mr. Electrico, who knighted the young Ray with the incantation "Live forever!" before folding up into history, leaving no trace; attending his high school commencement in the suit his uncle had been shot to death in years before; and hitting revival screenings of *King Kong* with a couple of other teenaged nobodies named Forry Ackerman and Ray Harryhausen.

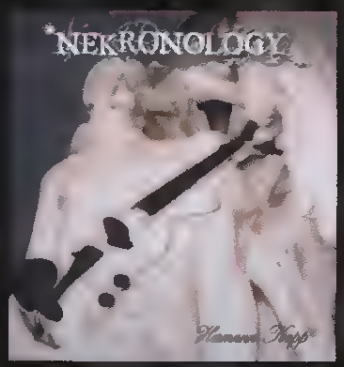
The greatest sense of Bradbury's impact on the world comes not from Weller, but from the people he's quoted – each chapter is preceded by words from the expected (Stephen King) to the unexpected (Hugh Hefner and Pixies frontman Frank Black) to the downright bizarre (Ace Frehley!?) extolling the virtues of Bradbury and the influence he's had on their varied lives.

Of course, no one could tell the stories of Bradbury's life better than the man himself. Spanning the 1960s to present day, the non-fiction collection *Bradbury Speaks: Too Soon From The Cave, Too Far From The Stars* gives us ample opportunity to share his thoughts as they developed over the course of his life. Filled with the same passion and charm he brings to all his work, these often brief but always vivid essays offer a keener insight into his mind and creative processes than any biography could.

Whether musing on muses (My Demon, Not Afraid Of Happiness), gossiping about Hollywood misadventures (How Something Wicked Came tantalizes with a tidbit of what might have been had Sam Peckinpah actually wound up directing *Something Wicked This Way Comes*), waxing grumpily about the overblown remakes of *The Mummy* and *The Haunting* whilst considering the persistent appeal of monsters in our culture (The Hunchback, The Phantom, The Mummy And Me), or simply celebrating storms (The Beautiful Bad Weather), Bradbury never fails to illuminate and engage with every word. Now aged 85 and still writing every day, Bradbury has, through his life and work, lived up to Mr. Electrico's fateful command. Live forever, Ray.



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WARNING: TRAVELOGUE OF TERROR

THE TOWER OF LONDON

London, England

by Chris Boutet



During the Middle Ages, it was thought that merely to look upon the four turrets of the White Tower would be to invite death upon one's family; it was, after all, e place practically dripping with horror and ill omen. Sure, it was e royal palace, but it was also a dank prison surrounded by a fetid moat, a house of unspeakable torture, the site of infamous beheadings and public mutilations and, as the years went on, by all accounts the most haunted site in all the British Isles, if not the world.

In the nine centuries since the first stones of the White Tower were laid in 1078 to today, the Tower's reputation has festered even further as tales of blood and gore that were passed down over the generations became more horrifically vivid, even as the Tower itself ironically has become tamer. Indeed, horror-seekers who visit the expanded 16th century complex that stands todey looking for a bloodstained scaffold on Tower Green with an axe still wedged in the block will find no such thing – this is not a part of its history of which London is particularly proud and, on the surface, steps have been taken to downplay the Tower's bloody past. But lingering beneath this veneer of placid lawns and shuffling tourists is a sense of deep sadness, and the echoes of a grim past.

After paying the £12 entrance fee, visitors to the Tower can wander in through the Byward Tower entranceway and find their own way around the sprawling ,thirteen-tower complex, but it's worth taking the included hour-long guided tour. Winding its way by Traitor's Gate, past the Bloody Tower and up to Tower Green, it's a good way to get acquainted with some of the main sites, the grisly details of the Tower's past, and interesting facts about its history.

For example, despite its reputation for bloody beheadings, very few executions actually took place within the Tower walls. Rather, the vast majority of them were public affairs held just up the road on Tower Hill amongst the cheers of the bloodthirsty throngs. More often than not, the preferred method was a quick beheading, although as the guides explain, things weren't always quick. In the 1685 execution of James Scott, Duke of Monmouth – considered the most bloody beheading ever witnessed in London's history – a drunken executioner took an astounding eight swings to sever the Duke's head, and even then had to resort to sawing through the last few tendons with the axe to finish the job.

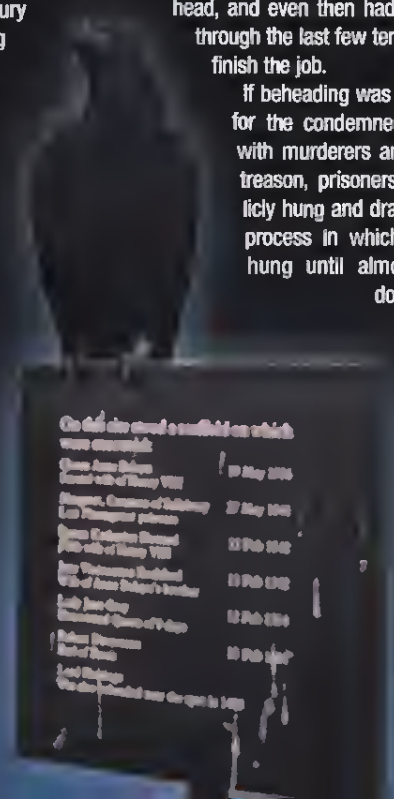
If beheading was considered too good for the condemned, as was the case with murderers and those accused of treason, prisoners were instead publicly hung and drawn and quartered, a process in which the executee was hung until almost dead, then cut down, split open and his organs hauled out and fried on a red-hot iron plate in front of his eyes. Finally, the limbs would be tied to four wild horses that would pull them into rough quarters.

By comparison, to be beheaded on the private scaffold of Tower Green away from the crowds was downright dignified, and was reserved for England's most esteemed prisoners. In all, only seven people were deemed worthy of the block on Tower Green, among them Henry VIII's famously Ill-fated second wife Queen Anne Boleyn in 1536, Henry VIII's lesser-known but no less ill-fated fifth wife Queen Katherine Howard in 1542, and the seventeen-year-old Lady Jane Grey in 1554.

While approaching the quiet, shaded square of lawn, your guide will relate yet another tale of execution gone wrong, as was the case with the 70-year-old Margaret, Countess of Salisbury in 1541. Mere feet from where you'll find yourself standing, Margaret managed to escape her bonds just before the axe came down and made a run for it. She was, however, closely pursued by the executioner, who stopped her in her tracks with an axe blow to the back and then proceeded to hack off her head right where she fell. Numerous sources have reported that, each year on the anniversary of her death, Margaret's screaming wraith can be seen running through Tower Green, replaying her brutal demise.

She's not alone on the Tower grounds at night, either. Although it's strangely unmentioned in the tour, the sheer number of ghostly sightings, sensations, and attacks at the Tower of London are legendary. Yeomen working late at night tell of having seen a headless Anne Boleyn leading a procession of dignitaries down the aisle of the Chapel of St. Peter ad Vincula to her resting place under the altar. There are regular reports from groundskeepers of phantom footsteps, conversations heard from empty rooms, guards who walk through walls, and the sudden sensation of being strangled while patrolling the dark, claustrophobic staircase of Salt Tower, once the site's dankest dungeon.

Even in broad daylight, visitors to the Bloody Tower have apparently encountered the spectre of two young princes, murdered there by their



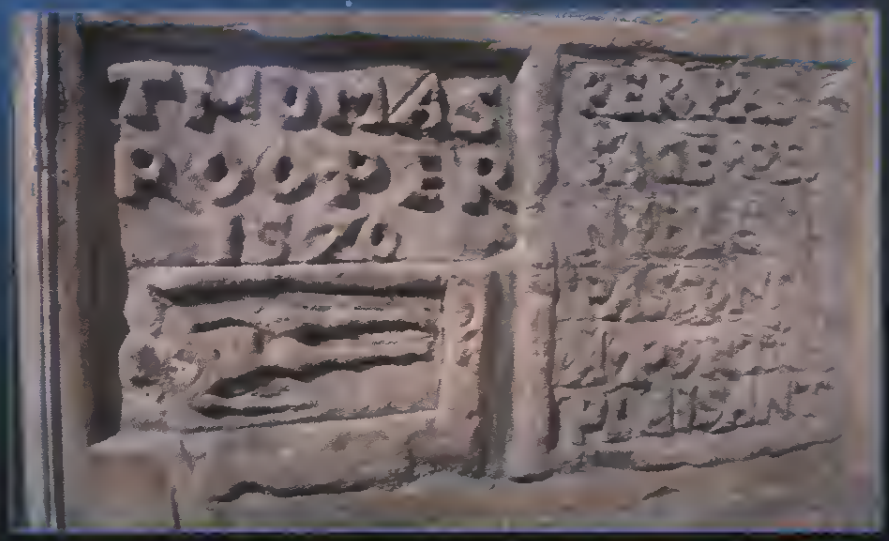
Photos by Rod Gudino; opposite page (above) by Kristine Ourram, (below) supplied

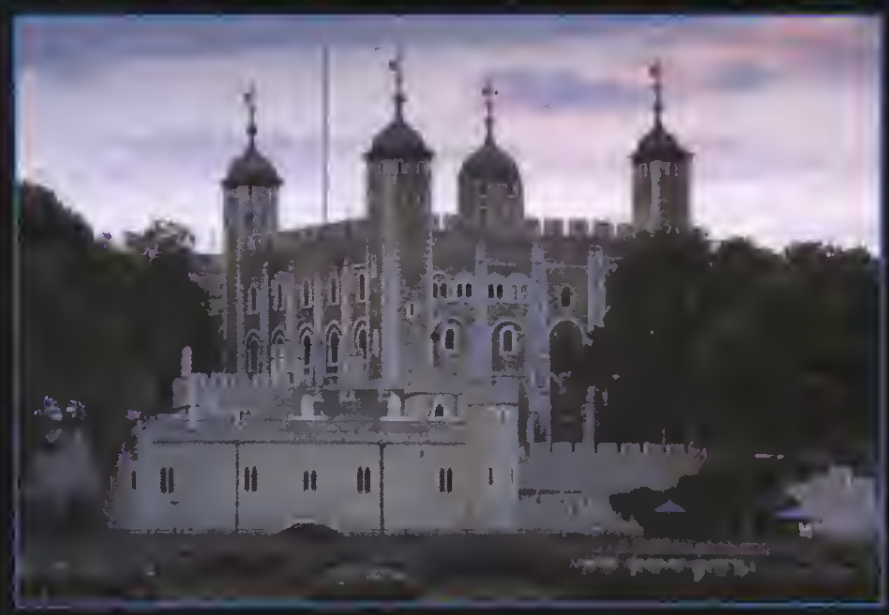
uncle Richard III, standing silently in their nightgowns and holding hands. There have even been a few animal ghosts reported roaming the Tower – the most famous account was recorded in January of 1815, when a sentry saw a bear lumber down the stairs and out the door of Martin Tower. Horrified, he stabbed it with his bayonet, only to see it go right through. He died two days later, allegedly of fright.

Once the tour breaks up, you are free to roam the grounds. You'd do well to wrap up your visit with a trip to the Wakefield Tower and the torture device exhibit housed within it. Here you'll learn that although most assume the Tower's history is rife with gruesome torture, the practice was actually only used sparingly for interrogation during the 16th and 17th centuries. When it was used, however, they made it count, as evidenced by this display of the three instruments used to extract confessions. The most common, of course, was the rack. More often than not the mere sight of it was enough to get someone talking – if not, they were strapped to the device and slowly stretched at the joints until they changed their minds. Sometimes, according to the exhibit, the ante was upped by tying each individual finger and toe to the rack to ensure maximum damage.

While the rack almost always delivered results, there were other devices thrown in the mix: the manacles – in which the victim was hung from the ceiling for days at a time by iron handcuffs, sometimes sharpened around the edges like knives to ensure a constant state of agony – and the Scavenger's Daughter, a simple set of irons that attached to the neck, hands and legs in such a way as to bind them in a sort of stunted fetal position. Where the principle of the rack was to pull someone apart, the Scavenger's job was to slowly crush someone into themselves as a winch was turned, bringing the knees closer and closer to the chin, shattering ribs and vertebrae along the way.

These instruments are just replicas, but they are, unfortunately, the closest you'll get to actual evidence of the Tower's bloodsoaked history. While the desire to leave this past behind is understandable, one can't help but feel more could have been done to preserve at least some of it. (The most disappointing moment of the visit was learning that the oldest dungeons and torture chambers in the central White Tower now house one of the site's many gift shops.) Still, there's a chill in the air as soon as you pass through the gates that can't be ignored, and the Tower of London's legacy will always live on in its stories of bloodshed and brutal murder.



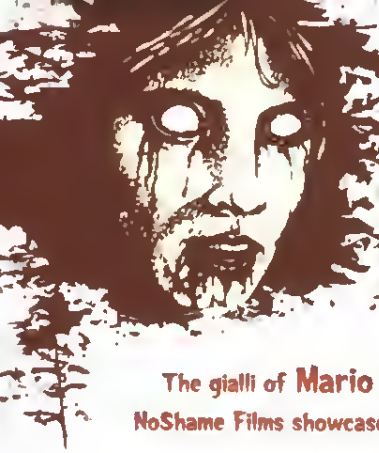


***The Tower of London**: (above) A sample of ancient grafitti carved into the prison walls; (below) A view of the building from across the Thames river.*

The Tower of London is located at Tower Hill, EC3N 4AB, in London, England. Find out more online at www.hrp.org.uk or by calling 0870 756 6060.







DINNER'S READY! THE GORE-MET

The giallí of Mario Bava and Dario Argento are considered the greatest, but two new DVD releases from NoShame Films showcase the equally influential work of the director who put the blades to the boobs: Sergio Martino.

Argento's whodunit debut, the relatively dry *The Bird With the Crystal Plumage* (1970), is regarded as the catalyst for the popularity of giallo – the highly stylized Italian murder mystery genre that captivated audiences after the decline of the spaghetti western in the late '60s. But the film that cemented the conventions of giallo in the explosion of movies that followed is undoubtedly Sergio Martino's *The Strange Vice of Mrs. Wardh* – the first of its kind to feature as much onscreen sex and nudity as it does violent murder. Martino, who currently works in Italian television, made four more classic giallí before the genre fell out of fashion. And although he's worked steadily over the ensuing 35 years, his subsequent films have never received the critical acclaim his giallí did.

THE STRANGE VICE OF MRS. WARDH (1970)

Starring Edwige Fenech,
George Hilton and Cristina Airoldi
Directed by Sergio Martino
Written by Ernesto Gastaldi

Algerian stunner Edwige Fenech was propelled to international stardom with her role as Julie Wardh, the unhappy wife of an American diplomat who returns to her hometown of Vienna with the man (Alberto de Mendoza) she married to escape the sado-masochistic clutches of her former lover Jean (Ivan Rassimov). A chance encounter at a wild party brings a third lover (Hilton) into Julie's increasingly complicated life. Against this backdrop of convoluted sexual politics and discarded clothing, a sex maniac terrorizes the Venetian populace by slashing pretty young women with a barber's straight razor. The mystery intensifies when the killer targets Julie.



Martino, who had one western and a couple of mondo films in his curriculum vitae, added an unprecedented amount of erotic violence to the giallo. Julie's titular strange vice is masochism, beautifully filmed flashbacks reveal her previous relationship with Jean where, in one, he beats her before they make love in the pouring rain and, in another, introduces a shattered wine bottle to their intercourse. The murders, including a sexy *Psycho*-inspired shower scene, are as stylish and bloody as any in Argento's early films. But unlike Argento's obtuse plots, Gastaldi's script is straightforward and engaging, offering multiple plot swerves that successfully mask the killer's identity and motivations until the final frames.

THE CASE OF THE SCORPION'S TAIL (1971)

Starring George Hilton, Anita Strindberg
and Alberto de Mendoza
Directed by Sergio Martino
Written by Ernesto Gastaldi

Where Argento made a string of variations on Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blowup* (1966), Martino's giallí are radically different. His next film, the wonderfully titled *Scorpion's Tail* (unlike many films in this genre, the animal reference actually figures into the plot), is a quintessential giallo.

The promiscuous wife (Ida Galli) of a wealthy businessman inherits a million dollars when the plastic model of a jetliner he was travelling in explodes in mid-air. She flies to Greece to cash in the policy, tailed by a suspicious claims investigator (Hilton). When she's murdered and the money disappears, the focus of the film shifts to an intrepid reporter (Strindberg) who becomes involved with both the mystery and the suave claims investigator.

Scorpion's Tail, which moves from London to the Greek isles, is even more lavish, exotic and vicious than its predecessor, ratcheting up the gore content beyond the genre standard stalk 'n' slash of *Strange Vice*. There are close-ups of slashed throats and hands and gaping wounds, autopsy photos, and in the most graphic murder, a broken bottle rammed into an eyeball. Bava's body count classic *Twitch of the Death Nerve* (1971) trumps all giallí in terms of violence and gore, but no other director made brutality as sexy as Martino.



NoShame Films presents stunning restorations of both films from the original negatives in the proper 2.35:1 aspect ratio. Extras include informative interview-laden featurettes, original Italian trailers, stills gallery and comprehensive booklets.



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"Do yourself a favor; don't just watch Feeding the Masses, LISTEN!".
– Horrorwatch

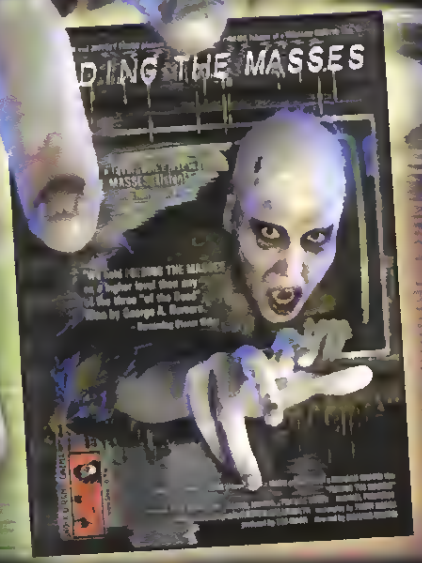
"We hold Feeding the Masses on a higher level than any of the three "of the Dead" films by George A. Romero."
– Screaming Stoner Video

FEEDING THE MASSES

DVD VIDEO

produced by *TED MARR* screenplay by *TRENT HAAGA*
directed by *RICHARD GRIFFIN*

The dead are returning to life via the Lazarus Virus, and the U.S. government is controlling the media by not allowing any walking dead footage on the air, thereby protecting the populace from itself and averting a widespread state of panic. It is up to a TV anchor woman, her trusty cameraman, and a demented military guard to defy the government blackout and tell unsuspecting citizens about the encroaching zombie epidemic.



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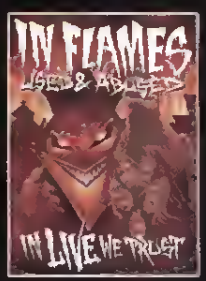
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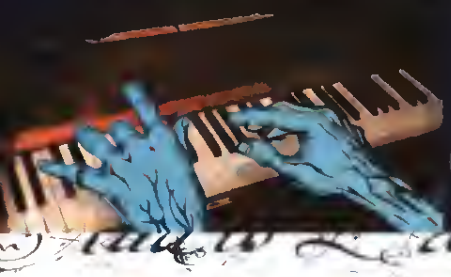
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AUDIO DROME

REVIEWS BY HEATHER ADLER, KEITH CARMAN, TOMB DRAGOMIR AND AARON LUPTON.



HOUSE OF WAX Soundtrack
Various
MAVERICK
Hollywood's big-budget re-imagining of Vincent Price's classic *House of Wax* ended up being far better than it had any right to be, but this soundtrack is exactly what you'd expect – a lot of made-for-MTV rock and alternative bands that have next to nothing to do with the movie. My Chemical Romance and Marilyn Manson offer darker tunes that are a little more suitable for a rural slasher, but since modern rock tends to be dark by default nowadays, their presence here is probably more coincidental than deliberate. A better choice is made with Joy Division's slinky, gothic number New Dawn Fades. Still, unless you just can't get enough of what's playing on the radio right now, chances are you're safe to skip on this latest product from Paris Hilton Inc. **AL** ☠



ROBERT SHORT Soundscape
Endless Night
RPSINC
Looking for a soundtrack for your next haunted house? Look no further. Robert Short, the Academy Award winner behind the makeup and creature effects of *Beetlejuice* and *E.T.*, tries his hand at music and the result is, well, an hour of sparse organs, howls, crow caws and simple, spooky cinematic chimes. The echoing gongs and achingly drawn-out keys might create a nice ambience for some sort of gothic affair, but it's a little too $1.99 post-Halloween Wal-Mart sales bin to be anything more than mediocre background music.
HA ☠☠



MISFITS MEET THE NUTLEY BRASS Lounge
Fiend Club Lounge
MISFITS RECORDS/RYKO
The latest product from Misfits Inc. seems to live up to its own hype as the most unusual 'Fits record to date – eleven Danzig-era Misfits tunes done classic brass lounge style by fellow New Jersey musician Sam Elwitt. While the album is a novel curiosity at best, there are some fun moments here. (Some Kinda Hate is a real standout, with its doo-wop vibe accentuated) and if you're a real fan you'll find it impossible to resist crooning along to these instrumentals. Elwitt's creative capacity is impressive as he uses dozens of different sounds and "instruments" from song to song and verse to verse. He seems to have a grasp of the campy spirit that made the original songs what they are. Frequent Misfits collaborator and legendary *Famous Monsters of Filmland* cover artist Basil Gogos contributes a beautiful zombie lounge piece in his incomparable style, but that's not enough to hide the fact that *Fiend Club Lounge* is ultimately just another unnecessary kitsch item that you might play once and promptly forget. **AL** ☠☠



ASMODEUS Psychobilly
Diabolique Royale
HAIRBALL 8 RECORDS
Rising from a graveyard somewhere in the Netherlands, Asmodeus will smash your ugly mug in with some seriously fast and brutal country, rock, and metal-influenced psychobilly. Any bunch of pompadours can sing about vampires and werewolves, but Asmodeus manage to actually work the horror into their music with creepy, cold intricate guitar work that will make you think Iron Maiden's *Killers* is lurking somewhere in the background. Arie's vocals are gruff and badass, but *Diabolique Royale* boasts surprising ingenuity by throwing in some mid-paced, bass-slapping riff-rock and dark country to even out the pace. If George Thoroughgood was a demented serial killer who listened to psycho, he would be in this band. **AL** ☠☠☠☠



THE ROCKETZ Psychobilly
Rise of the Undead
HAIRBALL 8 RECORDS
You'd swear these SoCal psychos dug up the decomposing corpse of



RUE MORGUE NOW PLAYING ON RADIO

BALZAC Punk
Out of the Grave and Into the Dark
MISFITS RECORDS/RYKO



We covered Balzac's *Came Out of the Grave* back in *RM#40*, but Misfits Records and Rykodisc have re-released it with a recent full-length called *Dark-ism* tacked on, plus an 80-minute DVD, so there's more than enough new material here to sink your fangs into. These Japanese fiends might not rip off the Misfits any less than their American counterparts do, but they're one of the few to make that sound their own by throwing in some extreme metal and industrial to create an insane and unstoppable modern horror punk Prometheus. The bonus DVD comes with three music videos, an atmospheric short film (appropriately titled *Marchen aus dem Horrorwald*), which borrows more from German Expressionism than the band's native J-horror, a whack of live footage, and five audio-only tracks. **AL** ☠☠☠☠

Devils in God's Country

Routinely dubbed "the next Slayer" following their second release *Ashes of the Wake*, Lamb Of God hails from the bible belt in Richmond, Virginia (former home to Edgar Allan Poe, see *RM#47*). Epic's recent DVD release *Killadelphia*, a pseudo-documentary blending over 70 minutes of live concert material with more than two hours of behind-the scenes footage, gets up close and personal with the band of bloody brothers. *Rue Morgue* catches up with singer Randy Blythe and discovers there's more horror to the five unholy apostles than meets the eye...



How does the genre find its way into your music?

I think metal itself can be a really dark art and all of us have a really serious appreciation for horror films so it's a natural marriage. I love the *Hellraiser* series; it's all real dark, brutal and aggressive stuff and, well, that equals metal to me.

How about lyrically?

Our lyrics tend to lean toward politics but also our lifelong interest in horror creeps in. I'm a big Bram Stoker fan and some of the imagery in our lyrics comes from that interest. Phrases like "black wings" are related to *Dracula*, but you'd have to be familiar with the story to catch it. In general though, [guitarist Mark Morton] and I like to write about the darkness of human nature and, in particular, the darkness of religion.

Have you seen any horror films that have impressed you lately?

Believe it or not I loved *Underworld*, and before you crucify me, remember I have a soft spot for vampires! [laughs].

Okay Randy, you're off the cross this time.

Jovanka Vuckovic and Shane Faulkner

Dee Dee Ramone, shot him some smack and propped him up in front of a lighthearted rockabilly band. Thirteen quirky, surfy tunes on *Rise of the Undead* feature capable surf-punk guitars, cheery three-part harmonies and the official gazillionth horror song named Die Zombie Die (about that fateful moment you realize your girlfnend is nibbling past your ear and into your skull). With softer sounding, somewhat silly songs about brain-eaters and vamps, *Rise of the Undead* pushes the earth of an overcrowded boneyard but finds a nifty little niche nonetheless.

TD 1/2



MICHALE GRAVES — Punk

Punk Rock Is Dead

Horror High

Most people agree that it was Graves' powerful, evil croon and impressive range that made the new Misfits what they were, but for whatever reason, the skull-faced front man has never been able to find much success outside of tiny horror punk circles. Now in his third outfit (his previous two, Graves and Gotham Road were both short-lived, unremarkable indie affairs), Graves is joined by ex-Mister Monster members in a collection of so-dumb-they're cool horror lyrics (Earth Vs. Spider, Godzilla, Dawn Of The Dead) and even more simplistic melodic punk. Nowadays he attracts more attention for his "republican punk" views at conservativepunk.com and intellectualconservative.com, but despite the political implications of this album's title, *Punk Rock Is Dead* is pure campy horror business in the vein of *American Psycho* and *Famous Monsters*. Too bad it never manages to approach either album's sheer cheese-horror brilliance. **AL**



THE HORROR OF IT ALL — Punk

Volume 1

Dr. Cyclops Records

It's hard to believe that just a few short years ago, with the exception of the odd new Misfits release or TSDL reunion, there just wasn't enough horror punk in the world to satisfy our Audio Drome. Now two months can barely pass before the underground secretes another compilation of DIY B-horror obsessed rockers. *The Horror of It All* rounds out the rougher, unpolished, and lesser-known fiends from the scene (with the exception of Calabrese, who are rapidly becoming a namesake for horror punk) and even though many of the bands don't sound like they were actually ready to record, there are some hidden nuggets here worth checking out. Creepersin rip off the Misfits with style on Bleed For Me, DieMonsterDie tear through a black-hearted Southern-fried hellblazer, and Ecto-1 take Danzig for an interesting spin on Lilitu. Definitely more no than yes, but if everyone has to start somewhere, Dr. Cyclops seems like a decent training ground to us. **AL**



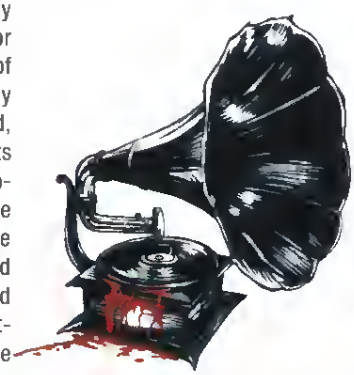
PUNGENT STENCH — Death Metal

Ampeauty

Nuclear Blast

Boxing Helena for the metal crowd, *Ampeauty* leaves little to the imagination. From the strangely enticing incorporation of stoner rock groove with death metal lyrical delivery to the offset booklet featuring amputees in various pin-up poses, this is as eerily sexy as it is kinda gross. Factor in Pungent Stench's appreciation for true shock rock that ranges from apotemnophilia (the compulsion to self-amputate), sex with said folks ("I love the handicapped/I wanna fuck those lovely amps!"), worshipping Satan and other general heresy/disgust, and one can see how this could be horrific but it's just fuckin' funny. The fact that the songs are actually headbanging anthems only serves to make *Ampeauty* an instant classic.

KC



AUDIO DROME



Inspired by a cultural history rooted in the cold darkness of the Scandinavian north, APOCALYPTICA blends the disparate forms of heavy metal and classical for moody masterpieces.

Symphonies in the Abyss

by Dave Alexander

Photo by Michael White

There are two dominant but radically different types of music associated with the modern horror film: the heavy metal oppression of loud, electric guitars and angry vocals, and the traditional score measured in instrumental peaks and valleys rich with organic strings. Apocalyptica, a Finnish group that fuses classical and heavy metal, strikes the ideal emotional balance between subtle beauty and the fury of the beast to craft some of the darkest and most sublime soundscapes you've never heard on a soundtrack.



"It's boring to be very obvious with aggression or dark feelings," explains Apocalyptica's founder and long-haired cellist Eicca Toppinen, during a sit-down interview with *Rue Morgue*. "There has to be a special psychological sense to the music."

Toppinen is flanked by band member Paavo Lötjönen, who elaborates: "It's like in the movies where psychological horror is much scarier than splatter."

The group, which began in the mid-'90s as a string quartet doing instrumental Metallica covers – and later tracks by Slayer, Pantera and Rammstein – morphed over several albums and member changes into a three-piece crafting original nightmarish compositions. (Toppinen and Lötjönen are joined by Perttu Kivilaakso, with various drummers sitting in, including Slayer's Dave Lombardo.)

Although they occasionally add guest vocals, the power of Apocalyptica's sound lies in moody instrumental compositions that combine the operatic, often demonic fury at the heart of Rammstein, Slayer and early Metallica with the symphonic beauty and sadness of composers like Dmitri Shostakovits and Edvard Grieg, whose Hall Of The Mountain King is covered on their recent self-titled album. The group's cellos – whether backed by bass-heavy drums and mimicking the burn of electric guitar, or gently accompanying violins and other traditional orchestral instruments in moments of icy sadness – explore a vast emotional range giving the compositions the quality of scores for horror films that don't exist.

Surprisingly, the closest the group has come to actually appearing on a horror soundtrack is with the song Deathzone (the last track on the aforementioned self-titled album). It was originally composed for the finale of Uwe Boll's *Alone In the Dark*, but was left off after the soundtrack switched labels and became a who's who of new school metal bands. (Given the universal dislike of the film, Toppinen admits he's happy to wait for another opportunity.)

"It's more colourful than metal," he says of Apocalyptica's signature sound. "There are light colours, but there's still pain in it. It's in the album artwork and it's the same thing with the music. There is a lot of beautiful stuff, but the beauty is not so easy, it's not sweet and romantic, there's some sorrow and pain and sadness in it."

Lötjönen describes those feelings as a cathartic part of Finnish history – emotions tied to the very landscape.

"We are fans of classical composers like Shostakovits, who make music with a horror feel," he says. "In Finland, melancholy music, dark music, is very famous because it's so dark up north. Finland is near the polar circle, weather is really harsh, people lived, really, in the middle of forests and worked like hell against the really harsh conditions."

Toppinen adds, "We come from a hard life, which makes a special Finnish sound."

That enveloping bleakness, which also forms the basis of Scandinavia's appropriately-named black metal scene, first manifested itself in the oral traditions of the country, when folk tales were passed on through call-and-response singing in a minor key, which mimicked the sound of crying.

Toppinen, who writes songs from his isolated house in the middle of a forest, says the desolate landscape, which also pervades Apocalyptica's album art, forms its emotional core. "It's a deep melancholy that swells on strings before crashing forward on the thunder of symphonic heavy metal.

For more information go to www.apocalyptica.com.

PLAY DEAD

GRAPHICS PLAYABILITY SHIVERS

HIGHEST RATING IS OUT OF OF THREE.

GAMES REVIEWED BY ANDREW LEE



COLD FEAR

PS2 | Xbox

Ubisoft

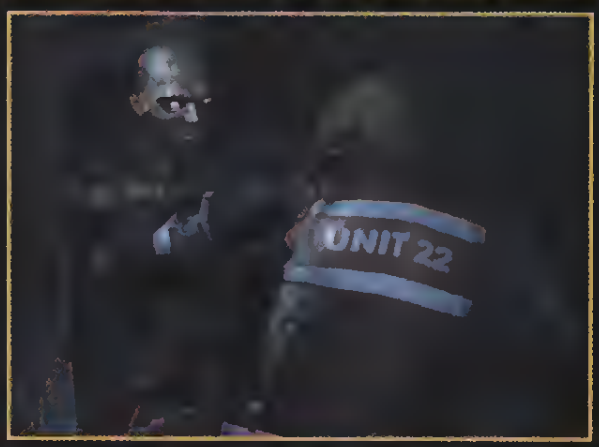
Pack a machine gun and water wings cuz survival horror just hit the high seas. In *Cold Fear* you're Tom Hansen, a Coast Guard rescue tech whose team is assigned to secure an abandoned Russian whaling trawler. Once aboard, however, your group is slaughtered, forcing you to team up with the lone survivor of the original crew, who informs you that the Russians have dug up some Lovecraftian-style sea creatures.

Called ExoCels, the baddies reanimate the former seamen into bloodthirsty abominations and to stop them you have to fight your way to a nearby oil rig and try to avoid infection long enough to get rescued.

The game plays and looks much like recent *Resident Evil* outings but with a sicker, slicker feel to it, especially when you're trying to control your character while walking on the pitching deck of tha trawler during a huge storm – one wrong step and it's overboard to a watery grave.

Like *RE* or *Doom*, weaponry starts with a handgun and quickly upgrades to rocket launchers and flame-throwers as play progresses. The mutants are repulsive as hell, so blowing their heads off is very satisfying, and since you can only penetrate the murky darkness a few feet in front of you with a shaky flashlight while wading through pools of blood and guts, tha chill factor is intensified tenfold. Add a sinister, heart-pounding soundtrack, and you've got one of the bleakest, creepiest and best titles of the year.







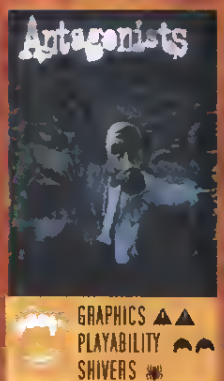
HAUNTING GROUND

PS2

Capcom

After surviving a horrific car crash that claims her parents, nubile young Fiona wakes up half-naked in a rusty dog cage in the basement of a decrepit castle. Stop ogling and lead her through twisted corridors, away from the demented lunatics who imprisoned her on behalf of their insane Master, who needs her life force. Unlike Lara Croft, Fiona doesn't have any heavy weaponry, and is prone to a panic mode that renders her character uncontrollable, so she's lucky to befriend a dog that helps her solve puzzles and take a bite out of the baddies.

Realistic gore imagery (see a henchman get crushed in a conveyor belt), a rich orchestral soundtrack, vivid cut-scenes and an intelligent back story elevate *Haunting Ground* to the level of similar titles *Clocktower*, *Fatal Frame* and *Silent Hill*. The fact that Fiona prances about in a skimpy outfit like some kind of tricked-out Scream Queen doesn't hurt either.



[illegible]

[illegible] Sourcebook

[illegible] Wolf

Antagonists, the newest sourcebook in the seemingly endless pantheon of the *World of Darkness* RPG series (*Vampire: The Requiem*, *Werewolf: The Forsaken*), expands on a whole new set of wicked adversaries. The first chapter deals with a favourite here at *RM* – the living dead – and tackles everything from the vacuous, mindless servants of Haitian voodoo to their shuffling, brain-eating cousins.

Chapter two concerns itself with the mortals who hunt the supernatural, while the third chapter, Cults, pertains to odd religious groups and sex fraternities, covering everything from brainwashing techniques to where they buy those snazzy cloaks. The last chapter, Fear Given Form, is a unique glossary describing creatures like the Filipino Aswang vampire. Though lacking an index and rife with spelling mistakes, the vividly illustrated 132-page *Antagonists* is another ornate tool for those looking to weave a more intricate and realistic subtext into their dark campaigns.


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Presents

WELCOME TO MY NIGHTMARE



USA - 1975
ALICE COOPER
Atlantic Recording Corporation

Every promised land has its Moses – light or dark – and there are few costume ghouls in modern mass-market horror, black metal or goth realms who'd dare leave Alice Cooper off their list of progenitors. Although the seed of horror rock's theatrics was planted with the voodoo coffin stage show of Screamin' Jay Hawkins in the '50s, Cooper put the evil in vaudeville – paving the way for Slipknot's rubber gimp masks and Marilyn Manson's creepy couture – with one album in particular, *Welcome To My Nightmare*, which effectively pushed horror rock into the limelight.

It was the dusk of the '60s when along came a black widow in the post-psychedelic late morning of classic guitar anthems. Beckoning us to Hell, Alice Cooper had arrived, using the name of a 17th century witch he claims he channeled through an Ouija board. Vincent Furnier (a.k.a. Alice Cooper) plucked his character's look from *Barbarella*'s Black Queen, and the mix gelled. Suddenly, music was no longer a safe haven from the incoming creepshow that was redefining film at the time through works like *Night of the Living Dead* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

In 1975 Cooper released his genre-defining album which, more than any other, stuck it to the masses with warped narratives wrapped in the velvet curtain of lunatic theatrics. The title says it all: *Welcome To My Nightmare*, a record that cemented Coopar as a grinning tour guide through a screwed gallery of scare imagery, twisted psychology and necrophilia.

The title track of this horror anthology introduces Alice as a friendly sadist, bouncing around in his cranial cavity, making us feel at home. The curtain parts and the opening act begins, and Cooper's guide role is usurped by the legendary Vincent Price (years before Michael Jackson would borrow him for *Thriller*) raving about the deadly black widow. Price begins with a slight, sexually excited pause describing the effects of the bug's neurotoxin: "...causing intense pain, profuse sweating, difficulty in breathing, loss of consciousness, violent convulsions and finally, uh, death." Cooper further twists the sexuality therein by describing the female Black Widow as "the unholiest of kings", switching its gender back and forth. We are clearly being spun around by madmen.



Alice Cooper: *Vincent Price and Alice Cooper beguile on Welcome To My Nightmare.*

The sensitive Only Women Bleed is followed by Cold Ethyl, a joke song Cooper still plays live, pirouetting a lifeless corpse around him in a grim gorefest that broke dirt for Ozzy, Iron Maiden, GWAR, Rob Zombie and, of course, Manson. Then it gets even weirder, thanks to a disconnected man-boy named Steven, star of tha latter songs. While details are almost schizophrenic poetry, the narrative suggests an undeveloped mutant flipping back into his childhood, reacting to his mother's voice like a screaming cat's. "Steven" timidly sings: "I don't lika to hear you cry, you just don't know how deep that cuts me/So I will cover up my eyes and it will go away/You've only lived a minute of your life/I must be dreaming, please stop screaming."

The immediate follow-up of The Awakening suggests a disturbing tale come full circle, as the singer edges along from panic to thrill as he realizes "...these crimson spots are dripping from my hand... and ooh it makes me feel like a man!" The curtain closes on an album that was as disturbing as it was popular. The surprising public approval of the record even resulted in Cooper appearing on *Hollywood Squares* and *The Muppet Show* and, strangely, birthed a major radio hit with Only Women Bleed.

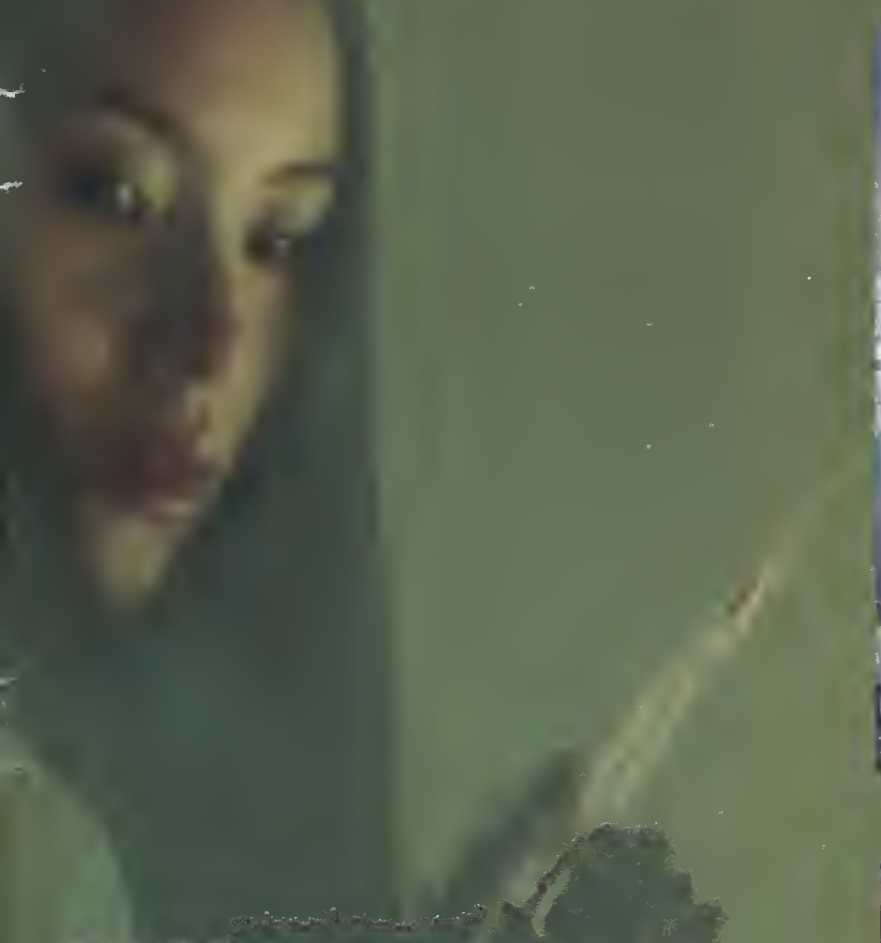
While Cooper's career had many highs, the precision of psychological horror here was a genius stroke, particularly in terms of having a self-aware ringmaster with a bleak yet enticing sense of humour. By packaging the sickness in the theatrics of Price, Steven, Ethyl and a standout cover (an illustration of Alice tipping his top hat by *Stars Wars* poster designer Drew Struzan), Cooper candied his poison for the masses, injecting a genuinely disturbing work of horror into the mainstream.

Looking back, *Welcome To My Nightmare*'s mix of subtle, transcendent fiction is a much safer read than its modern musical offspring – especially considering tha 57-year-old rocker is now as likely to be seen in golf shoes as black eye makeup – but they would never have orgied in blood without it.

Fish Griwkowsky

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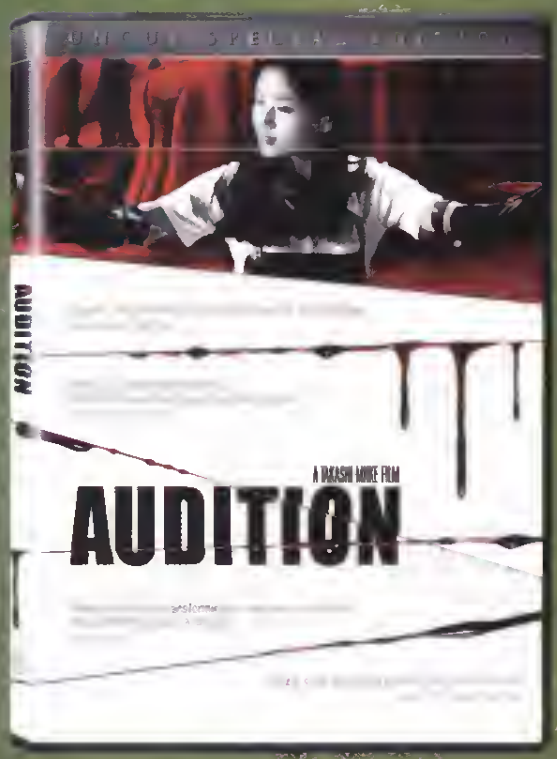


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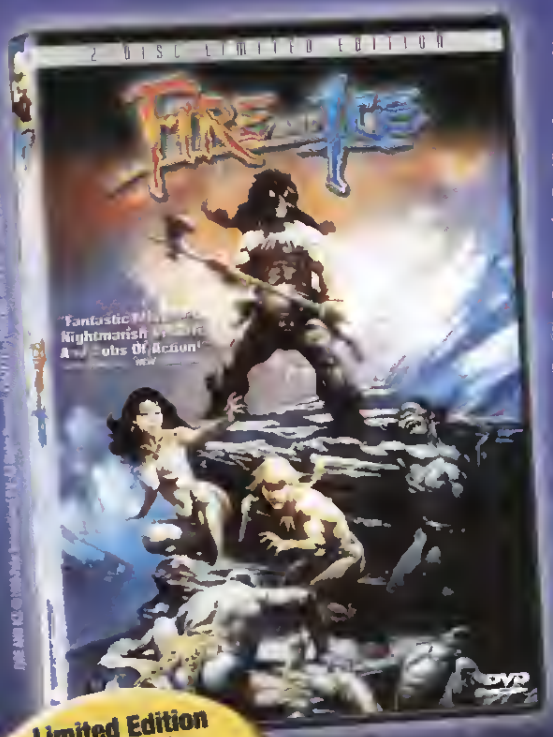
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